

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

*(From Earliest Times to the end of Mughul Period)*

*By*

K. RAJAGOPALAN, M.A., D.P.E.J.

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TO THE  
FOND MEMORY  
OF MY  
LATE GRANDFATHER  
K. Srinivasa Iyengar

*Nor Love, Nor Honour, Wealth Nor Power,  
Can Give the Heart A Cheerful Hour,  
When Health is Lost. Be Timely Wise  
With Health All Taste of Pleasure Flies.*

(From Indian Club swinging By—(Frank E. Miller.)

शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्



## FOREWORD

In this small volume Shri K. Rajagopalan has presented the story of Physical Education in India from pre-historic times to the end of Moghul rule. This is a pioneering attempt in writing a History of Physical Education in India and in the absence of precedents, the author has put in considerable labour and study in its preparation. The author has related the development of his subject to social, religious and political conditions of the time and has shown that land marks in the history of Physical Education are not accidental but that on the contrary Physical culture in India is a part of culture in general.

The author is an experienced Physical Educationist and with his deep knowledge of Indian History, he has presented his theme in chaste and simple language and has altogether relieved the treatise from the monotony usually associated with similar studies of history. The book, I am sure, would provide lot of interest to students and teachers of Physical Education and also to such other readers who are interested in the rich and varied phases of our past life. A very commendable effort indeed considering that it is the first in our country.

“Jai Hind”

J. K. BHONSLE  
*Director General.*

NATIONAL DISCIPLINE SCHEME,  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,

NEW DELHI. 15th Sept. 62.



## PREFACE

It is now nearly five years I started writing this book. The original idea was to write the whole period of the history from the earliest times to the present day but the book during the course of writing assumed proportions I did not foresee. In addition professional work contributed to the restriction of its scope and I confined myself to the end of Moghul period.

Though the various chapters have strictly not been divided chronologically, I have made an attempt to set this story of Physical Education in the back-ground of our cultural history and have taken care to ensure continuity to the maximum extent possible. Such an attempt might have led me at times to delineate at length certain aspects of our general history. The study of the history of Physical Education in ancient and medieval India is closely entwined with our general history and until such time the scope of this subject is enlarged and systematised by study and research, I think it shall have to follow the firm course of our general history. Even so, at no stage it would be wise to altogether sever this subject from its parent stalk, for, Physical culture in India has always been a part of our general culture.

The names of friends who have helped me through this small volume are too numerous to mention; I should anyhow thank my mother for her constant source of encouragement and General Bhonsle for kindly writing a foreword. I owe my gratitude to Shri D. B. Kothiwale, Principal T. I. P. E. Kandivli Bombay, for his useful suggestions towards the improvement of this volume.

This being a pioneer attempt in writing a book of this kind suggestions for its improvement are particularly welcome.

*New Delhi.*

*Dated : 15th Oct. 1962.*

*K. R.*



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I Physical Activities of Men in Prehistoric India	I
II Physical Education in Aryan India	25
III Physical Education in Buddhist Times	59
IV Physical Culture in Mauryan India	74
V Physical Activities of the People in South India	87
VI Post-Mauryan Era	98
VII Golden Age of the Guptas	118
VIII Harsha and His Times	138
IX Status of Physical Education Before the Advent of the Muslims	147
X Under the Mughul Rule	160
XI South India	190





## INTRODUCTION

A continuous and well-linked history of Physical Education in ancient India is wellnigh an impossible task due to the paucity of historical records. Details that are available are mixed with the spiritual and mythological aspects of our past life and this renders a clear and systematic treatment of the History of Physical Education in India, a matter of considerable difficulty.

We are unable to ascribe to any definite author the majority of our ancient literary works like the Vedas and the Puranas. Similarly the pioneers in the field of Physical Culture in ancient India remain obscure. Our century preserves the knowledge of Vedas only by the gift of hearing which our forefathers possessed. Memory alone passed on to posterity the treasures of Vedic lore. This queer anonymity has been one of the outstanding characteristics of Indian civilisation and it applies to the field of Physical Education too.

But it is erroneous to assume from the above account that our forefathers neglected the study of Physical Education. Several centuries before deep breathing exercises were found out in Europe, they were in vogue in our country in the form of '*Pranayam*'.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere perhaps in any religion such persuasive insistence can be found on early-rising, bathing and the purity of the body. The Indian mode of prostration to God is in itself a comprehensive physical exercise. Regular bathing, early rising, and personal cleanliness of the body have been some of the strictly necessary adjuncts to religious life

1. *Pranayam*—part of religious rite of a Brahman involving breath technique.

in India for ages. An appreciable portion of the religious literature of our country deals with the necessity of early retirement to bed, early rising from bed and the observance of regular and systematic habits of life. Temperance in food and drinks has been the heritage of our civilisation for ages. "He whose food and activity or exercise are properly regulated, whose toil and rest are properly adjusted in all works and whose sleep and working hours are properly determined, to such a one does the highest benefit come." In such strain, Lord Krishna advised Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. "A philosophy of life expressed in these lines would indicate that in Ancient India activity or exercise was highly valued."<sup>1</sup>

Charak, the great author of Ayurveda, insists that physical activity should be wholesome and should develop endurance and strength.

शरीर चेष्टाया चेष्टा स्थैर्यीर्च बलवर्धनी ।

"The accomplishments of Physical Education should be agility, effective performance of any work, good appetite, elimination of fat and the development of the internal organs as well as the external limbs" says WAGBHATTA, the famous author of Ayurveda.

लाघवं कर्म सामर्थ्यं दीप्तोऽग्निः मेदसः

क्षयः विभक्त घनगामित्रं व्यायामादुपजायते

The name of India brings to the mind of the majority of people in the west tigers, elephants, sanyasins and rope-climbers. They think of Rudyard Kipling's India and the passage of years has not obliterated from their minds the picture of snakes and snake-charmers which they invariably associate with the name of this country. Such an emphasis upon some minor

1. "Physical Education of Boys in the Secondary Schools in India"—  
By G.F. Andrews, pp. 1-4.



aspects of ancient Indian life has influenced several writers to the view that in India physical activities were ignored and that in the search of the highest spiritual welfare, the physical man was neglected and allowed to degenerate. Wren, for instance, remarks: "The Roman teachers who told their disciples that the healthy mind might be expected in the healthy body, and the Greek philosophers who told their followers that the beautiful soul inhabited the beautiful form, were better trainers of the young than the holy men of the East who told their followers that breadth of intellect, nobility and character and general merit were easier of attainment to him who was filthy, emaciated and physically degenerated."<sup>1</sup>

Such sweeping criticisms as found above reveal a lack of perception in the history of our country. The impact of religion on the social life and hence on the Physical Education system of a people has been an universal fact. There have been phases in the history of every country when religion has unduly dominated all spheres of national activity. "Thus after the break-up of the Roman empire in A.D. 486 people turned for solace to a spiritual conception of life. Everything was sacrificed to preparation for the world hereafter. In as much as the body was looked upon as antagonistic to the higher searchings of the soul, every means possible was taken to deny the body its natural comfort and even voluntary measures of self-torture were resorted to. It is quite natural that play should be not only ignored but vigorously combated in such an age."<sup>2</sup>

Again as for J.F. Williams an eminent authority on Physical Education, "asceticism and scholasticism held the minds of

1. Cited by J. F. Andrews in his "Physical Education for Boys in the Secondary Schools in India", p. 4.

2. "The Theory of Organised Play" By Bowen and Mitchell, p. 25.

men in ecclesiastical bonds that prevented a rational approach to the question of education in any of its aspects. The Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries broke the bonds of ecclesiastical tyranny and rebelled at the conception of schooling as pure discipline.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore to ascribe to religious forces the sole responsibility for the discredit of Physical Education in our country is not sound argument. In their urgency to decry the influence of religion on sports in our country, several western writers forget the invaluable adjuncts of our religion such as Pranayams, Suryanamaskars, early-rising and a hundred other healthy practices which are to this day considered inseparable from a true religious life. Only in recent times have the western nations realised the mistake of separating physical Education from the general scheme of education. After centuries of educational research and experiments we are yet to achieve a satisfactory cohesion between study and sports; whereas in ancient India Physical Education was divided into parts and given place in different subjects like Medicine, Military Science, Engineering, Eugenics etc. It formed an integral part of Indian culture and civilisation and could not be separated into an independent entity which could be grafted on the general body of the society and its culture.

Any observant student of the history of India up to the close of the last century will testify to the elements of permanence and orderly movement as the sustaining principles of Hindu society as compared with the restlessness of western society and its perpetual want of equilibrium. The continuity of India's civilisation is one of the most remarkable features of human history. Centuries before the Aryans inhabited India, she had

1. J. F. Williams “Organisation and Administration of Physical Education”, p. 1.



developed a high order of civilisation and held her own against the other two centres of civilisation in the east, *viz.*, Egypt and Babylonia. Through the passage of centuries, India has preserved a thoroughly individual culture of her own. In the words of Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, “nowhere else apart from India and China, has there been a real continuity of civilisation. In spite of all changes and battles and invasions the thread of ancient civilisation has continued to run on in both these countries. It is true that both of them have fallen greatly from their old estate, and the old culture is covered up with a heap of dust and sometimes filth which the long ages have accumulated. But still it endures and is the basis of Indian life even today.”

Though this book is mainly intended for the use of students in the Physical Education colleges of our country, I hope it would appeal to all those who are interested in sports and games. No true history of Physical Education can be written without a background of our history and it is assumed therefore that the readers possess a broad and general idea of the history of our country. As Physical Education is a part and parcel of general education, we cannot in the course of our treatment neglect reference to the mode of education existing in the respective periods under survey. Again, the type of education that obtains in a country at a particular period is largely determined by the social, economic, religious and other allied forces existing therein. Therefore it has become necessary to include in our survey such of those aspects that pertain to Physical Education, though they may not be intimately or directly connected with the subject.

A place has been given to the food habits of the people in ancient India as it is well known to every student of Physical Education that the health of a people depends much upon the type of food they consume. An investigation into the town

planning, sanitary and public health arrangements has been attempted as it was felt by me to be closely allied to a scientific study of Physical Education. Due importance has been attached to the mode of warfare that prevailed in each of the periods as the physical activities of the people in ancient India drew inspiration from the armies just as the armies of modern nations give patronage to physical culture.

Terms such as '*Physical Education*,' '*Physical activities*,' '*Physical Culture*' and '*Physical training*' have been employed in the course of this book not always appropriate to the situation; but to avoid the monotony of repetition it was to be so. For instance, the term Physical Education to denote the Physical activities of our primitive ancestors sounds a misnomer and is anachronic. But that can be no barrier to a proper understanding of the subject-matter as it has been repeatedly emphasised that the status of the physical activities of a people is proportionate to the development of their culture and civilisation.

While attempt has been made to adhere as closely as possible to the chronological order followed in general Indian history books, the periods covered have not been stated strictly in terms of years as the gradual development of Physical Education in our country from period to period is yet a subject for research.

There is tremendous scope for research in the field of Physical Education specially in the branch of its history in our country. The material available is scattered in hundreds of volumes, an appreciable portion of which is religious and therefore written in various regional languages. In the face of such enormous handicaps this book has no pretensions for thoroughness and it touches the fringe of the subject at best. Well might this volume have merited my labours if it serves to induce scholars to enlarge its scope and systematise its treatment.



## CHAPTER I

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES OF MEN IN PREHISTORIC INDIA

India's earliest inhabitants lived over a quarter of a million years ago. The physical features of our country were not as they are today and several parts of our land were uninhabitable by man. Authorities are of opinion that south was the early home of man in India. The early tools of man must have been river pebbles and blocks of wood and bone. But only the stone-tools have escaped the ravages of time, for wood is a material the life of which is very short in the climate of our country. The Indian termites (white ants) have a peculiar partiality for wood. We can anyhow be fairly certain that the earliest men who lived in this country wielded wooden weapons. They must have been akin to the wooden weapons which the Indian gods wield to this day—"a big-sized mace with a long handle and a heavy globular head ending in a sharp point."<sup>1</sup> We can infer that one of the weapons of our earliest ancestors was a club with which they smashed the heads of their human or animal foes. The point of the club was for the purpose of piercing the enemy when he was at too close quarters for the effective wielding of the club.

#### Stone Tools of Prehistoric Men

Stone tools and weapons were in popular use and as a matter of fact this period of human history derived its historical name as Stone Age from the tools which man used then. At the beginning man did not worry much about the shape of his

1. "Stone Age in India", by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, p-5.



tools and a stone haphazardly picked up served for many purposes. Then he learnt to grind the surfaces of his stone implements till they became smooth to the touch. This long stage of human growth and development which took hundreds of thousand years can be divided into two parts—the first called the PALAEOLITHIC AGE or that of the old rough stone tools and the second called the NEOLITHIC AGE or that of the new smooth stone tools. The progress of man was slow and pathetic and it needed countless centuries for him to give a shape and polish to the tools he used. Life then must have been to quote the words of Rosseau “Shortish, brutish and nasty”. Mortality among men must have been very great as they lived in constant dread of one another amidst fierce and powerful animals which were contending with them the supremacy of the earth. There can be no better tribute to the vitality of man than the fact that he survived till the end to hold the mastery of the universe.

### More Effective Weapons

“When primitive man first stumbled against a stone or hit his head against the overhanging bough of a forest tree, and instead of wasting his impotent rage in pounding the offending stone to dust or tearing that bough to shreds, he turned the experience to profit and learnt to fling that stone as a missile at an enemy or broke that bough and used it as a club, he began his human career on the earth.”<sup>1</sup> Human race owes its existence today to the physical excellence of our forefathers who with their courage and strength subdued the myriad of fearsome creatures which infested the thick Indian jungles. The glorious physical condition of the primitive men and their inexhaustible energy and vitality paved the way for the future civilisations of India. Well may we marvel at the excellence of pottery found in Mohenjo-Daro or at the greatness of the Vedic lore,

1. “Stone Age in India”, by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 5.

but the seats of these two great cultures descend out of the blood and sweat of millions of our nameless ancestors who fought a relentless and unceasing battle for the preservation of human race.

It is difficult to determine when the primitive man learnt to use the bow and arrow. It was indeed intelligent of him to find out that he could split the bamboo and bending it, tie a tough, dried creeper or the sinews of an animal and shoot long hard thorns from it. The invention of the above weapon of self-defence revolutionised human history as much as the invention of gun powder in a much later period of man's history in this planet. It is quite probable that our ancestors of those far off days used spears made of hard wood. The head of a hard, long stick can be sharpened by grinding against rock or burned so as to end in a sharp point. A plentiful supply of hard wood was easily available to him in the South Indian jungles.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMITIVE PLAY

Play is as old as human life. Man is a playing animal and he knew the use of his limbs long before he knew the use of a pen. Play is one of the most natural activities of human life and it is essentially an animal quality. Calves and infant-lambs sporting on green maidans is a familiar Indian scene which pleases our eyes to this day. Even our gods are not exempt from the attractions of play. Our Epics and Puranas abound with instances when gods have given themselves freely to play. A child surely does not recite poems or work problems in arithmetic soon after it comes into the world but it learns to play. Freedom and spontaneity embody the instinct of play and that is the secret of the ever-lasting thirst of man for play.

Long before man made history in this world by the force of his intellect, his physical prowess was put to a serious test by



forces which furiously fought with him for supremacy on land. Physical strength, endurance, speed, agility and presence of mind were some of the preludes that led to his subsequent intellectual ascendancy over his fellow animals. Threatened by ever-present dangers of life in the form of ferocious wild animals which were several times more powerful than himself, exposed to heat and cold in the impenetrable Indian forests, the wretchedness of the primitive man's condition escapes expression. The very fact that the human race was not exterminated proves the extraordinary resourcefulness of man. Much as he owed his survival to his superior intellectual faculties over his fellow-creatures, it is impossible to overlook the fact that conditions of life as they existed then never demanded of man a systematic display of his superior intellectual forces. Several thousands of years had to pass by before man could give proper play to his mental genius. What was demanded of him was more of a physical quality and man had to marshall all his nerves and strain every one of his muscles to defend himself against his foes.

A life of above description could naturally not have left man much time or scope for play. He was thoroughly engaged in the search of basic necessities of life that left him no time for any other occupation. But his daily activities embodied all the attributes of physical training. The physical activities which the modern man retains in the form of games and sports were indispensable necessities to our primitive ancestors. They had to run, jump, throw, climb and swim for their very living. The pleasures of such men were animal in character and consisted in the satisfaction of their primary needs of life such as hunger, thirst and sex and engaging in successful strife against animal and human foes. But as Bobbitt observes "there is in fact a heirarchy of plays ranging from the gratification of physical appetites and the pleasures of simple sensation at one end of the

scale up to the highest forms of intellectual play as found in science and philosophy".<sup>1</sup>

## PLAY AND LEISURE

At the beginning of his life on earth man had no time for any organised play or recreation. A desire for recreation is born out of leisure and man in the midst of his struggle for survival could not have had enough leisure for any specialised physical activity. When man advanced in his civilisation, play grew more complex and organised. Leisure is a necessary pre-requisite for the furtherance of human culture and civilisation and far back from his primitive life to the present day of Trade Unionism, man has fought for the achievement of leisure.

Primitive play was naturally based on primitive conditions of life and was a part of man's life. It was related to the elemental emotions of a savage life and was absolutely unshackled by social, religious and economic considerations. Unbridled by state or society it was true to life that was around. Spontaneity reigned supreme. Man was not in a much superior state to his fellow animals and therefore drew liberally from their habits. Mimicry in movement and noise of the myriad of animals that shared the earth with him must have been both a pleasure and profit ; profit in the sense that it helped him in luring the prey just as it helps a modern shikari. An examination of some of the uncivilised descendants of our primitive ancestors who survive to this day in remote places of our country would reveal how intensely susceptible to music and movement the primitive men must have been. Savages were impressed more by action than by speech and they gave vent to their violent emotions by physical movements and as a result

1. Cited by Wilbur P. Bowen and Elmer D. Mitchell in their "Theory of Organised Play," p. 3.



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dancing became a part of savage life. Untrammelled by rules and regulations such as prevail in modern sports and games, the primitive men assembled under shady trees and gave vent to their energy by violent physical movements imitating life and nature around them with boundless enthusiasm. Imitating the animals in their noises, movements and habits must have been a familiar pastime to children in those far off days.

We shall now set forth to examine briefly the distinct features of primitive play under its two main phases *viz.*, 1. PALAEOOLITHIC AGE (Old Stone Age). 2. NEOLITHIC AGE (New Stone Age).

### PALAEOOLITHIC AGE

“The cultural stages of man antecedent to the times when utile metal was first exploited by him are collectively known as the stone age, from the material chiefly used by him in fabricating the tools with which he began his career of power and control over environment.<sup>1</sup>” The study of this period of India’s history has been much neglected by scholars in our country and Mr. Foote “represents a solitary but brilliant response”<sup>2</sup> to the call of prehistory in our country.

Palaeolithic tools are mostly found in the districts of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Guntur and Nellore in the Andhra state and in Chingleput and North Arcot districts of the Madras state. They are also to be found in various places of the Hyderabad and Madhya Pradesh states. This strengthens our conviction that from the earliest times man flourished in the edge of the Deccan plateau.

1. Ancient India—Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 3, Jan. 1947, p. 12.

2. Ancient India—Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 3, Jan. 1947, p. 12.

In the very beginning pebbles, broken naturally at one end, appear to have been used. But soon man learnt to shape pebbles with the help of other pebbles. These sharp-edged tools of the Stone Age reveal that Palaeolithic men possessed much skill of hand. We are able to identify the following implements used by our remote ancestors:—

(1) Axes (2) spears (3) digging tools (4) circular implements for hurling purposes (like our modern discus but with sharp edges all around) (5) chopping implements (6) knives (7) scrapers (8) cores (9) hammer-stones and (10) stones for making fire.<sup>1</sup>

The extraordinary variety and abundance of these stone implements testify to the great industry and power of invention of the primitive men. The energy expended in making such a large variety and quantity of stone implements, an appreciable portion of which must have been broken in the process of making and lost in the daily search for food and shelter and hence replaced, is indeed amazing.

### **Food Habits**

The early man was mostly a vegetarian and he subsisted mainly on fruits, nuts and roots. This is proved by the fact that his food-tube is long, his tongue is smooth and his teeth flat, whereas the flesh-eating animals have a short tube, pointed teeth and a rough tongue. Seasonal variations in the supply of agricultural produce and a spirit of adventure must have induced man to take to flesh-eating. He found the flesh of animals to be tasty and thus acquired flesh-eating propensities. But yet the staple food of man was only vegetable produce and he only added meat to his original diet.

1. The above classification is based on the findings of Mr. Bruce Foote.



### **Powerful Animal Foes**

Man at this stage of development was essentially a food-gatherer and his quest for food involved tremendous big-muscle activity. His weapons were crude and often ineffective against his powerful animal foes. The primeval forests of the Deccan must have abounded in tigers, lions, panthers, cheetahs, hyenas, bears, elephants, rhinoceros, bison and several other powerful creatures which are extinct today. Sharks and other varieties of sea-animals must have taken a heavy toll of human life. Poisonous creatures like the cobra and the viper and stinging creatures like scorpions, spiders, hill-bees, wasps and ants must have offered man continuous challenge. The Palaeolithic man would have been soon vanquished by this dreadful zoological environment but for his extraordinary physical activity and skill in hunting.

### **Physical Excellence**

In such a society there was no place for physical weaklings. Ever watchful of his foes, man had to keep himself in a very high physical condition if he were to survive the perils of life. The search for daily food involved indescribable dangers and man had to be an expert runner, jumper, thrower and climber for his very existence. Unlike his modern counterpart who trains weeks before an athletic meet the primitive man was always under training and every day of his life was a major athletic meet. The poverty of the means of self-defence available to the primitive man was to a considerable extent made up by the wealth of his physical fitness. The innumerable dangers by which he was surrounded stimulated his courage and made him an efficient hunter, expert in the use of his simple weapons. Such a perilous life developed the strength of his body and the keenness of his sense-organs. Consequently, man was an outstanding performer of all the basic activities of life such as running, jumping, throwing, climbing and swimming.

This is easily evidenced by the fact that he has survived to hold sway over other creatures on earth. Men who braved such serious odds of life with very limited means of self-defence must have been outstanding athletes and one is inclined to speculate what would be the result if a score of such men are let into our modern Olympic arena !

### **Use of Fire**

We do not come across any trace of the use of fire among palaeolithic settlements but Mr. Foote is of opinion that they must have known the use of fire. Our ancestors in those far-off days must have known that fire was a means of safety from the attacks of their animal foes and that food treated by fire tasted better. They must have produced fire by rubbing together two pieces of wood or by striking a stone against another. To this day in India fire for sacred Vedic rites is produced by churning wood with a hollow on its surface by means of a fire drill. It was not given to our early ancestors to make fire with as much ease as we do today by striking a match. It involved a considerable amount of physical activity, patience and perseverance. After making a fire they had to preserve it in their open dwellings and it required naturally painful watching against wind and rain.

### **Family Resemblance of the Palaeolithic Men**

The Palaeolithic man lived in the open air and had no fixed habitation. He was a great wanderer. He moved widely in search of food and usually selected places where he could find food and suitable stones for the manufacture of his implements. The stone tools of these early men who inhabited several corners of the world show a great family resemblance and authorities are inclined to the opinion that there must have been an intimate intercourse between the peoples who lived in different parts of the world. The early man there-



fore was a great walker and he traversed thousands of miles on foot. We cannot help wondering at the colossal strength and activity these early men displayed in their life-time.

### **Early Hunting**

Man is gregarious by nature and even from the earliest days of his history on earth he must have lived in small groups. A common dread of his dangerous animal foes must have impelled him to live in groups. Towards the close of the Palaeolithic age man settled in more fixed habitations. The Palaeolithic man was an active hunter. He hunted animals for food. Hunting has been a popular pastime for the Indians from time immemorial. Ancient Indian monarchs were expected to spend six months of the year hunting in forests. Hindu religion never looked at hunting with disfavour. On the contrary Lord Siva, one of the most prominent Hindu deities, wears a tiger-skin. In the Vedas the 'upper clothe' or YAJNOPAVITAM is defined as deer hide worn on the left shoulder.<sup>1</sup> Even today the Brahmin youth wears a bit of deer hide tied once a year to the sacred thread and that is the modern much minimised 'yagnopavitam'. People who practice strict meditation sit on tiger and deer skins which cannot be polluted. The primitive man wore his hide on the left shoulder just as the modern Brahmin youth wears his sacred thread, obviously for the purpose of keeping his right arm free to fight against his enemies in defence or offence.

As we have stated earlier it took hundreds of thousands years for the Palaeolithic man to give proper shape and polish to his stone tools. This early development of man was painfully slow and pathetic. The age wherein man learnt

1. Taittiriya Aranyaka, II, 1.

to use stone tools of smoother and better manufacture is called the Neolithic Age and in India the passage of the Palaeolithic into the Neolithic stage was one of peaceful evolution and was not marked by any catastrophic change. Let us now briefly study the nature of the physical activities of men in the Neolithic Age.

## NEOLITHIC AGE

Even towards the close of the Palaeolithic stage man began to establish himself in settled habitations and during the Neolithic stage of his development he learnt to domesticate animals and slowly turned to a pastoral life. He had also learnt the useful art of making pottery. The tools used by man in the new stone age, though made by stone, were of a far greater variety than those of the previous epoch. A detailed description of the various tools used by man at this stage of development is outside the scope of this brief volume but following are some of the most prominent implements manufactured by the Neolithic man :

(1) Various kinds of chisels (2) hammers (3) anvils (4) corn-crushers (5) cylinders (6) discs (7) mace-heads (8) mealing stones (9) mortars (10) mullers (11) pivot-stones (12) pounders (13) Polishing grooves (14) slick-stones (used to put a gloss upon the surface of cloth while still on the loom) (15) whet-stones (16) marbles (toys) (17) knives (18) lance-heads and selected stones of many kinds for various purposes.

### More Leisure for Man

This long list excludes the wooden tools of which they must have had a very large variety and which have not survived. This new stone Age was great step in man's advance towards a civilized life. Man learned to clothe himself and was gaining control over his environments. Attendant with



the increasing ability of man to appease his wants he spent lesser amount of time in the fulfilment of his basic necessities and hence he had more time at his disposal for lighter pursuits of life. We have already emphasised that the arts and literature of man are born out of his leisure time and now with the increasing leisure available to him, man clearly lifted himself from the level of animals. He realised that life was not all eating and sleeping and with his increasing mastery over nature and his environments, found a new meaning for life. This elevation of man resulted in hitherto undreamt of expressions of life, such as music, painting, dancing, play and a myriad of other pursuits of life. The walls [and roofs of several caves inhabited by the Neolithic man contain crude drawings in several colours and he made his tools from stones of different shades which preserve their hue and polish to this day. The varying colours of the pottery used by man at this stage of his history testify further to his amazing perception of colour.

### **Mammoth Physical Activity**

The manufacture of the different types of stone-tools, a description of which is given above, involved mammoth human activity and industry. Several of the above tools were made from selected stones which were procured from far distant places and getting them, says Mr. Bruce Foote, "involved considerable labour and travel on the part of the Neolithic people". Several of the stones are of great weight and size and it is indeed remarkable how these men moved them such great distances. The extraordinary muscular strength and vitality of the Neolithic men is testified by their sustained physical activity and endurance.

### **Community Life**

Unlike his Palaeolithic predecessors who confined themselves to the Deccan plateau, the Neolithics spread themselves all over

India and several parts of our country show evidence of the existence of Neolithic men. Dogs, sheep and cows appear to have been the first animals domesticated by man. The domestication of these animals led to a pastoral life and hence man passed from a nomadic life to a semi-settled life in communities. He stayed at a particular place till the supply of grass-lands for the needs of his cattle was assured. A pastoral life in turn necessitated community life and men formed themselves into several groups and communities, each group having a leader or leaders of its own. The predominance of one group over the others was the natural outcome of such an organisation and the passage of countless centuries has not obliterated the instinctive devotion and loyalty of man to his group or community. Nationality, as it is understood in modern times, is nothing but a manifestation of this primitive instinct of man. No better display of this age-long quality of man can be found as it is expressed by boys in our schools and colleges during Intramural Sports and Tournaments.

### **Imitative Traits of Primitive Play**

The predominance of one community led naturally to its mastery over the others and one of the results was increasing leisure to the community in power. An increasing amount of leisure leads to sports and festivity. The time no longer needed for the satisfaction of the material wants was directed towards play. Imitation and freedom were the essential attributes of primitive play and they are yet the leading features of modern play.

It is a lesson of history that ideas that are in line with the spirit of man stand the test of time and they cannot be done away. The pursuits necessary for the existence of primitive life formed the backbone of primitive play. The time man saved from such pursuits was directed towards an imitation of those pursuits. As a result, man evolved for himself a pattern of play



and recreation at once in relation to the life around him and true to his nature and personality. In the description of the stone tools used by man, given above, we find marbles (toys) and it easily proves that marbles have been in use in our country right from the Neolithic times. But the student of play should note that the shaping and polishing of stones was one of the outstanding activities indulged in by man during this phase of his development. He did not do it for mere fun but for his very existence on earth. The marbles then could have been the handiwork of primitive children who imitated the occupation of their elders. It is quite conceivable, our primitive ancestors had competitions and tournaments in the making of stone objects and prizes were distributed to the winners in the form of choicest stones in rich colours ! Imitation therefore was one of the chief qualities of primitive play. There is perhaps no game in modern times which does not in one way or other imitate the primitive occupations of the early man. Countless examples can be given for the prevalence of primitive characteristics in modern play but we shall content ourselves with a few.

### **Primitive Characteristics of Modern Play**

For instance the modern game of Kabbadi may represent the struggle which resulted when one hostile group tried to cross the boundary of an area occupied by another group. Wrestling, which is a highly popular physical activity in our country right from epic times, is perhaps the oldest sport in India. The primitive men must have indulged freely in wrestling contests. The 'Surya-namaskar', which is a very old physical exercise in our country, owes its origin to nature-worship indulged in by man far back in his childhood on earth. Stick-play with the use of bamboo (known by the name of SILAMBAM in Tamil) and wand-drills as they are practised in India today are predominantly a primitive method of defence and attack. The forests of India abounded with bamboo, right from primitive times and the Palaeolithic

and Neolithic men found it quite handy and useful as a weapon for defence and attack against their animal and human enemies.

### **Improved Methods of Hunting**

Hunting was yet one of the chief occupations of man and Neolithic hunting must have been vastly different from the hunting practised by his predecessors; for, it should be kept in mind that the men of the new stone-age had the company of dogs during their chase. Further he had weapons of a more improved type at his disposal and as such his hunting must have been more offensive in character. The leisurely occupation of tending cattle led to the development of music and dancing and even today pastoral tribes in India are well known for their mirth and jollity. Lord Krishna who is a by-word for mischief and boyish pranks is said to have been brought up among such people.

### **Forerunners of Later Civilisations**

With their increasing mastery over earth the Neolithic people practised several arts and occupations and they are indeed the immediate forerunners of the later civilisations that came to exist in India. They knew the use of both cotton and woollen fabrics and they used ornaments profusely. Certain earthen-ware figures of women belonging to Neolithic age, found in Salem district in the Madras state, show a unique style of hair-dressing practised by primitive women. Indian women are remarkable for their love of decoration and ornaments right from the oldest times.

### **Worldwide Movements of Neolithic Men**

Authorities are inclined to the opinion that there was extensive intercourse between India and the rest of the world during the Neolithic Age, for, Neolithic pottery and tombs found the world over show a close resemblance. This means that there were worldwide movements of people during that age and the



enormous physical strength and endurance of these primitive men who traversed continents, excite our wonder and admiration.

To conclude our survey of the physical activities of man in his early days of existence in India, we shall quote P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar who is an authority on Stone Age in India. "The stone Age is still very much with us. In our villages shooting stones from slings is still widely used, both as a volley to disperse a crowd and as an artillery preparation for burglary. Singlestick (with wands of the male bamboo) is still played and experts in singlestick use it as a means of offence and defence. Schools of the noble art of fencing with the bamboo stick still exist in various places where secret methods of advancing on the foe, jealously guarded by professors of fencing from becoming known to all and sundry, are taught to favourite pupils. By these methods one man can disarm and lay low a hundred opponents. The bow, made by bending the split bamboo, is still found in several village homes; clay balls, dried in the sun, are shot from these bows for driving off from fruit trees, monkeys and other depredators."

### IRON AND COPPER AGE IN INDIA

The age of stone in India was followed by the age of iron and copper. The age of stone seems to have extended up to 300 B.C. in South India. Compared to the change from Palaeolithic to the Neolithic Age the subsequent changes appear to be imperceptible. But there is authentic evidence to the effect that the use of iron was popular in North India during fifth and fourth centuries before Christ; for Herodotus, the famous Greek historian, says that India was one of the countries which sent troops to swell the gigantic army of the Persian emperor Xerxes who fought Greece in 480 B. C. The Indian contingent fought under the command of a Persian general and used cane bows and iron-tipped arrows. Greek writers record that a present of 100 talents of white steel was presented to Alexander by some Punjab chiefs.

The use of metals must have considerably improved the defensive power of man against his animal foes and also equipped him much better in his struggle against nature. The finding of metals by man increased his armoury and his hunting was more effective. He used metal-tipped spears and arrows and he should have found plenty of game in the Primeval forests of our country. He hunted now both for pleasure and for living. Means of subsistence grew comparatively easier as he could kill the animals needed for his food more easily than he did with his crude stone and wooden weapons. So we can safely conclude that the birth of metals further advanced the leisure available to man. With that, man increasingly turned his attention towards pursuits of life which were not directly connected with the satisfaction of the basic necessities of life.

## INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

We shall now direct our attention to the most important phase of the prehistoric culture of our country and examine the nature of the physical activities of man during that period. While we have only scraps of evidence as regards the stone and metallic ages in India, we have abundant information regarding the existence of a high order of civilisation that flourished in the region of Indus. Archaeological excavations conducted in Harappa (between Lahore and Multan) and Mohenjo-daro in the Larkana district of Sind, both of them now in West Pakistan, have revolutionised the history of India. They prove indubitably the existence of a very high order of civilisation hitherto unsuspected. A study of the history of the early civilisations in the world establishes the fact that all of them were found on the banks of great rivers. So it is in the case of Egypt and so it is with Babylonia, the other two centres of higher civilisation in the ancient East.



## **Sanitation and Public Health**

It is impossible to give here a detailed description of the conditions of life as they existed then, nor is it necessary as almost every educated Indian would have studied elsewhere details about the rich cultural heritage left to us by our ancestors who occupied the valley of Indus about 2500 B. C. The cities of the Indus valley civilisation enjoyed a surprisingly high order of sanitation and public health that can well excite the envy and admiration of modern Public Health engineers. The inhabitants knew how to lay out a city with straight broad roads, align them with closed drainage, live in houses that appear to be better constructed than the majority that are in existence in our country today, use fine pottery, wear ornaments of gold and stones, dress in cotton clothes and eat a varied and mixed diet. But it should be borne in mind that these people still used stone implements along with a few copper and bronze tools. For this reason the culture unearthed in Harappa and Mohenjo-daro is called the copper-stone (Chaleolithic) age.

Modern nations have realised the truth that the standard of health and efficiency of a people depend upon a good sanitary and public-health organisation and in this respect the people of the Indus appear to excel. We know today that however well-organised a programme of Physical Education might be, it is bound to be a failure if it is not backed by an equally efficient system of health organisation. This is indeed a problem in India as we come across hundreds of schools and colleges which are too much crowded, ill-ventilated and lacking in several essential amenities needed for health. Dusty playgrounds, ill-kept and filled with dirt, defeat the very purpose for which they exist and boys exercising therein cannot achieve the objects of Physical Education.

That nearly five thousand years before our ancestors in the valley of Indus realised this truth, indicates the

excellence of their culture and the soundness of their social organisation. The name of Mohenjo-daro invariably brings to our mind health and organisation. It is well-known to every student of Indian history that the culture unearthed at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa has won the admiration of the world more for the public health and sanitary arrangements and the excellence of their city-planning than for anything else. All their houses had their own bathrooms and latrines. Every street had a brick-lined channel and drains from houses on either side of the street led into it. Sewage passed through cess-pits before they passed into the main drains. Bath-rooms and closets from houses had pipes that led to the drains. There was excellent water-supply. Houses that had two or more storeys were well served by drainage.

### **Swimming Pool**

One of the remarkable buildings, unearthed at Mohenjo-daro is a public bath or swimming pool. The swimming pool covers an area of about 12,000 sq. ft. This bath, which was rendered water-tight, is provided with steps leading down to the water, and several rooms adjoining the swimming pool obviously served the bathers to change clothes before and after bathing. Ingenious arrangements for filling and emptying the pool are provided. The pool which remains to this day speaks to the engineering skill of the people of the Indus valley. The existence of a public swimming pool with flights of steps on the ends, similar to our modern pools, warrants us to the conclusion that these people who lived in the far off centuries indulged in swimming and water-sports. All evidences point out that the swimming bath existed for public use.

### **Democratic Elements of the Indus Valley Civilisation**

Most of the writers of Indian history have not put sufficient emphasis on the essentially democratic elements of the



**Indus Valley Civilisation.** When volumes have been written about the social, cultural, religious and economic aspects of the Indus Valley culture, few writers have given sufficient importance to this outstanding feature of that civilisation. Unlike in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, where buildings were aristocratic and meant for the rich, the social amenities and means of public health provided in the form of commodious houses, baths, wells and systems of drainage were all provided for the common people. The importance attached to the health and welfare of the commonest citizen who inhabited this valley about 5,000 years ago deserves emulation.

The people who inhabited this area enjoyed a very high order of civilisation, which considering the later phases of civilisation in our country almost appears anachronic. The inhabitants were highly artistic and numerous objects found in the course of excavation testify to a high standard of social life. Men and women wore beautiful ornaments and a form of pictorial writing which still remains undeciphered was in popular use. They were skilled metal-workers and employed gold, silver, lead and copper and knew how to make bronze. They wore cotton textiles the use of which was not known to the western world until twenty or thirty centuries later. The finely glazed pottery they used are the earliest specimens of their kind known to the civilized world. They had domesticated several animals which shared their daily burden of work.

### **Varied and Colourful Life**

We have earlier in this book emphasised that the art and culture of man is born out of his leisure time. The manifold pursuits of life practised by men in the Indus Valley and the advanced state of their culture indicate the increasing availability of leisure to the men and women who lived during that period. The numerous finds from the ancient sites of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa bear evidence to the varied and colourful life led by

the people who occupied it. They must have been a healthy, prosperous, cheerful sort of people unfettered by the caste system and the mystic complexities of religion which are of a much later origin. Terra-cotta toys unearthed in large quantities reveal that the children amused themselves with them. Toys such as rattles, whistles in the shape of birds, figures of men, women, birds and carts were in use. Birds were mounted on wheels and the carts are identical to those which are still found in several parts of India. Some of the toys had nodding heads similar to those exhibited during the Dasarrah festival in thousands of Indian homes today. Children of the Indus Valley appear to have amused themselves by modelling with clay.

### **Recreational Activities**

The following account from the 'History and Culture of the Indian people' throws more light upon the recreational activities of men and women who lived in the Indus Valley. "Marbles, balls and dice were used for games. Marbles were used as play-things both in Sumer and Egypt. That dicing was a common pastime just as it was in Vedic times is indicated by the large number of dice unearthed. Both cubical and tabular specimens are found, the latter being the commoner. Unlike the oblong pieces in common use in India at present, they are usually cubic in shape like the European dice; but the arrangement of numbers differs from the European system (where the sum of points on any two opposite sides amounts to '7'), '1' being opposite to '2', '3' to '4' and '5' to '6'. The tabular dice invariably made of ivory have three sides marked with numbers 1, 2, 3 and the remaining side is decorated with longitudinal lines. Of the seven pieces found at Harappa, four bear markings like those of Mohenjo-daro. On two are marked '1' opposite to '2', '3' to '4' and '5' to '6', and one has markings like the modern dice. Thus there were three different ways of marking dice in the Indus Valley. It is not certain whether the throwing of dice constituted a game in



itself. Possibly dice were used in conjunction with board-games, as two incomplete specimens of game-boards of brick have been found. The boards on which these games were played were probably made of wood and have therefore perished. Some flat models of fish in ivory appear to have been used in some game. Some representations on amulet seals showing men shooting a wild goat and a large antelope with bows and arrows and the remains of large antlers of deer and stags indicate that hunting was indulged in. Bull-fighting was probably another pastime.<sup>1</sup>

### **Exact Age of the Civilisation**

There is a wide controversy as regards the origin and the final disappearance of the people who constituted the Indus Valley Civilisation. We are not also certain whether this civilisation is anterior or posterior to the Vedic culture. We shall steer clear from any such controversies as the main purpose of our book is to trace the growth and development of Physical Education in India. Suffice it to say that the people who inhabited the Indus Valley made healthy and happy homes for themselves and organised a settled society with sound administration. Their civilisation marks a transition from the prehistoric to cultural history of India and serves as a bridge between the time when man lived in thick jungles surrounded by animals and to a period when he lived in organised cities with an advanced state of culture and civilisation. To them goes the credit of furthering the recreational pursuits of man and lifting him clearly above the state of animals. The first steps towards health and organised recreation were taken by these brave people and man since then has not looked back. We shall now in the succeeding chapter examine the physical activities and the mode of recreation of our Aryan forefathers.

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## CHAPTER II

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN ARYAN INDIA

The Aryans came into India about 1500 B.C. The original home of the Aryans in all probability must have been Western Asia but it is difficult to say anything definite in the matter. The advancing hordes of the Aryan immigrants must have met with considerable opposition from the people who inhabited India at that time. The Aryans won their fight with the strength of their numbers and the excellence of their physique.

These Aryans were a vigorous, nomadic people. They appear to have entered India not as invaders but as peaceful emigrants with their flock of cattle, their household goods and gods. It is evident they soon came into conflict with the original inhabitants of the country who seem to have lived in fortified towns. We find references in the Rig Veda about the pillared forts of the enemies of Aryans. Several of the hymns of the Rig Veda appeal to their god INDRA invoking his aid in the destruction of these forts. It is interesting to note that Indra the Vedic god is also known as "PURANDARA" or the shaker of cities.

If the great civilisation of the Indus Valley was anterior to the Vedic culture, then in all probability the fortified towns mentioned in the Rig Veda could mean the cities of the Indus Valley about which we studied in the previous chapter. Anyway, we can be quite certain that the Aryans encountered severe opposition from the inhabitants of the country. The Aryans occupied Punjab at first and then spread themselves all over the north of India.

## **Rig Veda and the Aryans**

We learn about the life of the Aryans in India from Rig Veda. This is the earliest work known to India and it is the oldest of the entire Aryan race. From a study of the Rig Veda we can easily understand that the Vedic civilisation was anything but primitive. These people were divided into tribes and each tribe or group had its chief or king. The duties of the king are not clearly defined. He was the undisputed leader of his people and in addition to leading them in wars he was expected to protect them and ensure them a happy and prosperous life. This early kingship must have been a potent factor in the victory of the Aryans in their prolonged struggle against the 'Dasyus' or 'Dasas', the original dark-skinned inhabitants whom the Aryans dreaded and held in contempt. A definite leadership at this early stage of their history enabled them to offer a unified front to their enemies. The superior fighting ability of the Aryans was another cause of their victory. They were highly skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, the sword, spear and battle-axe. The Aryan armies were organised into divisions of foot-soldiers, cavalry and war-chariots. The Aryan private was well-equipped as he was usually provided with a bow, arrows and quiver, a coat of mail, hand-guard and a helmet.

## **Superiority of their Fighting Abilities**

In comparison with the advancing Aryan armies, those of the original inhabitants appear to be ill-disciplined and lacking in organisation. Several hymns in the Rig Veda speak about the terrible yell with which they attacked the Aryans and their disorderly and mad rush at their enemies. Obviously they put their trust on brute force and unstudied courage and as a result in spite of their great valour, they were no match to the organised armies of the new settlers.



## A Joyous and Virile People

In addition to the king, the Aryan tribes had their 'Purohitas' or priests who took charge of the spiritual welfare of the people. They were maintained by the kings to sing hymns and supervise sacrifices. The caste system had not yet taken roots and the Aryan society was governed by simple rules. The 'Purohita' was quite often a soldier and he followed his king to the battle-field. Contrary to the popular assumption that the Aryans were a mystic, superstitious and passive people, these early visitors were a joyous and virile people, full of spirits and adventure. "Can you not see them trekking down the mountain passes into the unknown land below?" asks Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. "Brave and full of the spirit of adventure, they dared to go ahead without fear of the consequences. If death came, they did not mind. They met it laughing. But they loved life and knew that the only way to enjoy life was to be fearless and not worry about defeat and disaster."

Look at the following prayers addressed to their gods by the Vedic people. Could that have been done by men who did not value bodily strength and activity?

(i) May I have voice in my mouth, breath in my nostrils, sight in my eyes, hearing in my ears, hair that hath not turned gray, teeth free from yellowness and much strength in my arms.

(ii) May I have power in my thighs, swiftness in my legs, steadfastness in my feet. May all my members be uninjured and my soul unimpaired.<sup>1</sup>

(i) What energy the lion hath, the tiger, adder and burning fire, Brahman, or Surya.

1. Atharva Veda—Hymn LX, Book XIX, p. 317. Translation by T.H. Griffith.

And the blest goddess who gave birth to Indra, come  
unto us conjoined with strength and vigour!

(ii) All energy of elephant and panther, all energy of gold,  
men, kine, and waters,

And the blest goddess who gave birth to Indra come  
unto us conjoined with strength and vigour.

(iii) Might in car, axles in the strong bull's courage, in  
Varuna's breath, in Vata, in Pajanya,

In warrior, in the war-drum stretched for battle, in the  
man's roar and in the horse's mettle,

May the blest goddess who gave birth to Indra come  
unto us conjoined with strength and vigour.<sup>1</sup>

### Mode of Hunting

The hunting of lions, boars, buffaloes, deer and birds was a favourite form of amusement among the early Aryans. The bows and arrows were their favourite weapons but antelopes were caught in pits, boars were chased by dogs and buffaloes caught by the lasso. Lions were trapped in pitfalls, lured into pits or ambuscades or followed up and surrounded by hunters. Tame elephants were employed to capture the wild ones. Chariot-racing, dancing, music and gambling were other forms of recreation.

### Popularity of Gambling

Gambling must have been an extremely popular pastime. The following poem from the Rig Veda gives forth the complaints of a man addicted to gambling.

(1) "My wife rejects me and my mother hates me;  
The gamester finds no pity for his troubles.

1. Atharva Veda—Hymn XXXVIII, Book VI, p. 265. Tr. by T.H. Griffith.

No better use can I see for a gambler  
Than for a costly horse worn out and aged".<sup>1</sup>

See how a player in Vedic times invokes the aid of his gods for the destruction and defeat of his opponents in the game of dice!

(2) Bear butter to the Apsarases, O ! Agni and to the Dice  
bear dust and sand and water  
The gods delight in both oblations, Joying in sacrificed  
gifts apportioned duly.

(3) The Apsarases take pleasure in the banquet between  
the sun and the libation-holder.  
With butter let them fill my hands and give me, to be  
my prey, the man who plays against me.

(4) Evil be mine opponent's luck ! Sprinkle thou butter  
over us.  
Strike, as a tree with lightning flash, mine adver-  
sary in the game.<sup>2</sup>

If he resorts to divine aid for overcoming his opponent, he is equally remorseful for any foul practices he might have employed in the course of the game. Here in the following hymn he asks for the pardon of his gods.

(1) If we have sinned with both our hands, desiring to take  
the host of dice for our possession,  
May both Apsarases to-day forgive us that debt, the  
fiercely-conquering, fiercely-looking.

(2) Stern viewers of their sins who rule the people forgive  
us what has happened as we gambled.

1. Rig Veda, X-34-4.

2. Atharva Veda—Hymn CIX, Book VII, page 380. Tr. by T.H. Griffith.



Not urging us to pay the debt, we owed him, he with a card hath gone to Yama's kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

### The First Club-house

Zimmer has shown how the 'Sabha'<sup>2</sup> in Vedic period served as the modern club houses after the serious business was over. In the post-Vedic period we come across an institution called 'Samaja' or 'Samajja' which seems to have served similar functions.

### Nature of Vedic Education

Vedic education rested largely on 'Sruti' or the gift of hearing. Knowledge was attained and passed on to posterity by means of hearing. Students learned under the guidance of a 'Guru' or teacher. In the early Vedic period much attention was paid to enunciation and pronunciation. The number of pupils in the charge of a teacher was restricted, comprising mostly the sons, daughters and close relatives of the teacher. Consequently the teacher could give personal attention to his charge. A close contact existed between the teacher and the taught. The students helped their 'Guru' in his household duties and the dignity of labour was stressed upon in the daily life of the students. The daily routine of a student involved strenuous physical activities such as cutting firewood, gathering 'Kusa' grass for daily rituals and begging alms for the master.

Education for a boy started by about his fifth year after the ceremony of 'Yagyopavitham' (the thread marriage). The period of study was not fixed but differed from case to case. The period of studentship was not considered to be over even when the student left his teacher. He was a student the whole

1. Atharva Veda—Hymn CXVIII, Book VI, p. 310. Tr. by Griffith.

2. 'Sabha' was an Aryan institution which functioned as a parliament for the disposal of public business by debate and discussion.

of his life. During the later Vedic period, education grew in status and proportion and "witnessed the growth of a vast and varied literature registering in some of its works the Upanishads, the highest level of intellectual attainments and spiritual progress."<sup>1</sup> Women in this age were not prevented from study and we hear of accomplished women scholars. When later the caste system came into vogue the educational system underwent changes to suit the frame-work of the society. As a result education assumed a vocational bias based on the occupations of the different castes.

### **Caste-system and the Decadence of Aryan Society**

The origin of the caste-system is difficult to guess but it is evident that the simple rules of living of the Aryans gradually became more and more complicated until they hardened into taboos. With their increasing prosperity and wealth the Aryans must have despised trade and industry as inferior occupations and the caste system therefore rested primarily on occupations. History is replete with instances when prosperous nations grown giddy with power and success came to look down upon industry and trade. The death-knell of the decadent Roman Empire was due to the ease and luxury of her citizens born out of centuries of wealth and comfort. As for the Aryan society the priests held the key to learning and they came to be called the 'Brahmins'. The rulers of the people were called the 'Kshatriyas'. The mass of the Aryans who were traders and agriculturists were called 'Vaisyas'. The last caste, the 'Sudras', consisted of the original inhabitants of the country called 'Dasas' or 'Dasyus'.

There is no doubt as regards the fact that the caste system did a great disservice to the strength of Aryan society. It is still a riddle how a healthy and joyous race as the Aryans sub-

1. Hindu Civilisation, R.K. Mookerji, p. 106.



mitted themselves to be fettered by such an unwholesome institution. As students of physical education the caste system of the Aryans appears to us all the more distasteful as any such rigid division of society into castes is antithetical to the spirit of sports and games. A playfield is a place where any such disparity would appear most out of place. But at this distance it is a comfort to us to know that the caste system of the Aryans in early stages was not as strict as it grew to be in later ages. People belonging to one caste were permitted to engage themselves in activities which did not strictly belong to them. The author of one of the hymns in Rig Veda says, "I am a composer of hymns, my father is a physician, my mother grinds corn on a stone; we are all engaged in different occupations."<sup>1</sup> How imperfectly the caste system flourished among these sturdy races is shown by many facts which still loom out in bold outline amidst the interpolations and additions of later writers. SANTANU, the ancient king of Hastinapura, had a brother DEVAPI who was a priest. The most learned character in the post-Vedic epic (Mahabharata), YUDHISHTHIRA, is a Kshatriya."<sup>2</sup> DRONA, the most skilful warrior and the physical education teacher of the Kauravas and Pandavas is a Brahmin.

Anyway, the caste system came to stay and it formed the edifice of Aryan society for several centuries till it received a shock by the advent of British rule in India. The dawn of independence for India has struck at the roots of the caste system and in the face of legal denial it is undergoing rapid changes. Years have yet to pass before we can draw any decisive conclusion as regards the ultimate shape it would take.

### **Division of the Society**

As a result of the division of the Aryan Society into four

1. Rig Veda, IX-112-3.

2. Civilisation in Ancient India—By R.C. Dutt, p. 130.



different castes each caste came to be associated with distinct functions. Elaborate and complicated rules of conduct grew up and thus sprang up the 'Asramas' or the various stages of life for each caste. The Asramas or stages of life for the Brahmin were four *viz.*, (1) 'Brahmacharya' (Period of bachelorhood), (2) 'Grahasta' (Period of family life); (3) 'Vanaprastha' (Period of sojourn in forests) and (4) 'Sanyasa' (Period of renunciation). The Kshatriya did not have the last stage *viz.*, Sanyasa. The Vaisya had only the first two. The first stage was a course of exemplary physical and mental discipline. A student passing through that stage was expected to undergo a life of celibacy and austerity under the immediate and continuous guidance of a Guru or teacher. It was a life of discipline and purity. Formation of character, building of a robust body and acquisition of sound educational qualifications were then the objects of the first stage of life. Could there be a nobler objective for education?

### **Excellence of Vedic Education**

After a passage of nearly forty centuries of civilisation we have evolved a scheme of education outlining in principle the same features that characterised Aryan education. While we in this present century only have them as ideals and untranslated aspirations, it goes to the credit of our ancestors who virtually applied them in practice. In the absence of regular school buildings and the colossal backing of the state that education receives today, the educators of those bygone days produced literature that still forms the backbone of our culture. The names of some of the scholars produced by their type of education stand as specimens for the highest form of human development. The heroes of our epics were not mere intellectual men. Bhishma, the grandest warrior in Mahabharata at the noise of whose bow-strings the entire army of the enemies shivered in terror, was highly learned in all the sciences of his day. Dharmaputra, the son of justice, who is

represented as a scholar of very high order did great deeds of courage on the battle-field. Well might Plato have revelled at these robust specimens of manhood embodying a grand synthesis of body and mind which was ever his dream.

### **Endurance of Aryan Traditions**

We have been profuse in our praise as regards the Greek method of education and right from the period of Renaissance to the present day, countless books have been written to eulogise the unique method of the Hellenistic system of training the youth. Students of Physical Education would do well to note that centuries before the birth of Plato and Aristotle, Indians had perfected a scheme of education embodying the highest principles of human development. The masters of Athens taught nothing that was not already in our Vedas and Upanishads.

It would be ungrateful on our part to deny the immeasurable contribution made by the Greeks to civilisation and in particular to the cause of Physical Education. But it is significant to note that nearer at home, we have equally a great system with its proportionate distribution of emphasis on all aspects of human personality. While the valuable teachings of the Athenian masters remain between the covers of dusty books, the supreme counsels of our ancients still breathe life to our polity and are yet active forces today. The sweet perfume of that ancient philosophy pervades the daily life of thousands of our citizens. Centuries have not been able to obliterate the lasting influence of such sound educational doctrines.

In this context it is interesting to note what E.B. Havell, a reputed English historian of India, has got to say. Discussing the effects of Alexander's invasion of India, he remarks: "The raid itself could have left no impression upon Indian civilisation. In the after period, when Greece had lost all political influence



and the light of Hellenic inspiration grew more and more dim, Indo-Aryan civilisation continued to advance and showed no sign of decadence a thousand years later. The condition which made Greek culture an inspiration for her Roman conquerors had no counterpart in India. The Indo-Aryans, unlike the Romans, had their classics, their literature, their epics and philosophy before Athens was built. The classics of Greece in art and literature were part of the spoils which the Romans won in war, but India did not conquer Greece and at the closest contact of Hellenic and Indo-Aryan culture the latter had by far the greater vitality and creative power. The points of resemblance between the two, which have impressed western writers so strongly came from their common ancestry and social traditions.”<sup>1</sup>

### **A Comparison between Greek and Aryan Ideals**

All said and done, the physical excellence and well-being which were enunciated in the Greek teaching were not as integral or as intimate a part of their general scheme of education as represented in the Indian mode of training the youth. Proficiency in athletics and games was a virtue and distinction to a Greek citizen and a part of his education. To the ancient Indian student it was an embodiment of the soul and a necessary prerequisite for his spiritual well-being. It was a part of the routine of daily life and inseparable from a true religious life. Suryanamaskar and Pranayam for instance were not mere auxiliary exercises but a part of religious life without which he failed in his duty to God. In addition, the humility of soul and respect to the teacher are distinctly Indian features. The principles of the ancient system of education suited the genius of our country and have withstood the test of time. Aristotle knew well the soundness of our ancient educational system. Did

1. Aryan Rule in India—By E.B. Havell, p. 63.



he not advise his illustrious disciple Alexander to enquire into our learning, when he started on his conquest ?

Alexander, it appears, followed the advice of his master and sought acquaintance with Brahmins. To quote Kenneth Saunders "to one DANDAMIS he sent an imperious summons; only to be reminded that he was not God, that a sage had no use for anything Alexander could offer, and that a Brahmin had no fear of death, '*Dandamis hath need of nothing from thee, come thou to him if thou hast need of wisdom.*' Here the ancient East speaks, conscious of power. It is clear that if India had been united under such a leader as PORUS even Alexander could have done little against her".<sup>1</sup>

### Rajasuya and Asvamedha

During the later Vedic period with the division of society into castes, ceremonials developed for the anointing of emperors and sacrifices such as *Rajasuya* and *Asvamedha* for paramount kings took place. The Aryans being a warlike race expected martial qualities from their rulers. The rulers if they wanted to win the respect and esteem of the people, had to prove their valour and physical abilities.

The *Rajasuya* was intended for the Kshatriyas alone. *Satpatha Brahmana* contains vivid descriptions of this ceremony. According to it three kinds of arrows, '*Drava*' (for mere shooting) '*Ruja*' (for piercing an enemy) and '*Ksuma*' (for missing his aim) were handed over to him who performed the ceremony. The bow was truly a Kshatriya's strength. We learn from the *Satpatha Brahmana* that the duty of preparing the play-ground on the occasion of this ceremony belonged to the *Sajata* or the tribesman. From this we easily understand that the ceremony was associated with public games and sports. It is significant

1. A Pageant of India—By Kenneth Saunders, p. 50.

to note that the sturdy Aryan people attached high importance to games and sports and on the occasion of his anointment, a king had to prove to the people his physical fitness and ability. The post-Vedic epic, Mahabharata, describes the performance of Rajasuya by Dharmaputra.

The performance of 'Asvamedha' involved the sacrifice of a horse. The sacrificial horse was let to roam at its will and the king by the strength of his arms occupied all the territories visited by the horse. It is again a test for the valour of the king who had to establish his reputation as a sportsman and warrior before he claimed the title of an emperor.

### **Vajapeya**

Another notable Vedic ceremony was the '*Vajapeya*'. Its performance won for the sacrificer everything in this world. It was both for the 'Brahman' and the king. The latter by offering it became a Samrat or emperor. '*Vajam*' meant strength and he who performed it became stronger than the others. In the Vajapeya, the performer of the ceremony shot northward seventeen arrows showing that he was a ruler over many a people.

### **Stress on Physical Fitness**

All the three Vedic ceremonies associated with the coronation of kings stress upon physical fitness and from the importance attached to it by the Aryan people we are led to question the opinion of Prof. Hopkins who holds that physical defects were no serious bar to succession to the throne for Indian monarchs. He cites the example of 'Dhrtarastra', the blind king, who is mentioned in the epic Mahabharata. "The enthronement of Dhrtarastra was a temporary measure and it was the result of causes beyond human control. As temporary measures people acquiesced in these arrangements. These would undoubtedly



have met with vehement opposition from the public if they had been permanent measures.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Breathing Exercise**

Though we find from a study of the Rig Veda that the life of the people was predominantly devoted to physical activities, we do not find the direct mention of any particular system of physical education. But it is evident that the Aryans knew the value of breathing exercises. It is indeed an invaluable contribution made by Indians to the cause of physical education. As in the case of most of the physical exercises of the early Aryans this breathing exercise was not an extraneous feature of their daily life but strictly a part of their everyday duty. The amount of importance attached to their regular performance may be inferred from the fact that they were made part of the daily worship to God. The Aryan genius consists in the fact that they enshrined their ideas in the form of institutions. Ideas perish but institutions stand the test of time. To ensure a permanent place for physical activities in daily life, our forefathers secured religious sanction for them. If some of them survive today after a passage of centuries it is due to the patronage of religion.

### **Value of Pranayam as a Physical Exercise**

The value of PRANAYAM as a physical exercise has been stressed upon by various writers both ancient and modern. But here is an ingenious explanation given by Prof. Pramatha Nath Mukhopadhyaya which deserves examination.

“By the normal acts of respiration, incoming and outgoing breath, the emanations evolved within the body and acting as independent and supplementary sources of activity, are cast off; by regulated respiration and stopping it for a while, KUMBHAKA as it is called, the emanations are stored up, which means

1. Journal of American Oriental Society, Vol. XIII, p.p. 143-144, as cited by Dikshitar, V.R., in his “Hindu Administrative Institutions”, 69. p.



not merely conservation but augmentation of the proper radio-energy of the body ; according to the principle explained above, the energy of the emanation not being allowed to dissipate by going out, is added to the proper radio-energy of the body and further, we have the energy excited by the emanations. Hence Kumbhaka secures radio-energy of all three constituent kinds ; whilst ordinary respiration results in partial dissipation of the atomic energy of the body, the most prolific source of energy hitherto known to us.<sup>1</sup>

### Physical Activities

Hunting, riding, archery, wrestling, fist-fighting, hurling of javelins, swimming, running, jumping, digging, dancing etc., must have been the form of exercises prevalent in those days. Rig Veda mentions how the sage Agastya developed his strength by digging with a hoe (*vide* Rigveda 1-179-6).<sup>2</sup>

The early Aryans avoided child marriages. They strictly observed celibacy up to a particular age to avoid premature old age and death.<sup>3</sup> From a careful study of the literature belonging to the times we can safely conclude that people lived healthy and long lives.

### Mere Physical Activities do not make Physical Education

Mere physical activities do not make physical education. If we are to judge the civilisation of a people by the amount of physical activities they indulge in, we may have to decide in

1. Cited by Pramatha N. Bose in his "Survival of Hindu Civilisation", Part II, p. 68-69.

2. The following hymn from Atharva Veda indicates in addition the popularity of horse-racing and the existence of regular race-courses.

That we may win us wealth and spoil we poets verily call on thee.  
In war men call on thee, Indra the hero's Lord, in the steeds race course call on thee.

Book XX—Hymn XCVIII, p. 413. Tr. by T.H. Griffith.

3. Atharva Veda 19-61, Taitiriya Aranayaka, 4-42.

favour of savage tribes. Public health, sanitation, town-planning, recreational facilities for the people and the encouragement of fine arts like music, dancing and painting are the necessary adjuncts to a good programme of physical education. In the words of Plato.....

“The mere athlete becomes too much of a savage and the mere musician is melted and softened beyond what is good for him ; the two should therefore be blended in right proportions.”

### **Fine Arts and Sports**

Many people, specially men, wrongly believe that dancing and music are effeminate arts not fit for strong men with an athletic turn. Nothing can be more false than this contention. If it were so, how do they account for the love, strong and sturdy tribes of savages have for dancing and music? We have earlier in this book observed how the wild savage tribes noted for their strength and manliness are keenly susceptible to music and dancing. Indian traditions have never looked upon such fine arts as antithetical to the manliness of man. From time immemorial our armies have been followed by dancers and musicians. We find in Ramayana the partiality that RAVANA had for music. Our gods are keen appreciators of good music and tradition affirms that Ravana escaped destruction from the wrath of Lord Siva when he attempted to lift the mountain abode of the god, by displaying his wonderful ability in the art of music. Even modern armies employ professional musicians and scarcely do we find an athletic meet in our country not accompanied by music. So is the case with international sports engagements like the Olympiad.

As for painting and sculpture, nothing excites the admiration of a true athlete than the representation of a graceful and symmetrical physique in stone or colours. Only, in recent



times photographs have largely replaced paintings and the modern sportsman revels in the hobby of collecting and studying them both for his aesthetic satisfaction and for perfecting his technique.

### **Town Planning**

The Aryans in India led a colourful and interesting life. They did not live—as the Spartans did centuries later—a rigid and gymnastic life shackled by the iron laws of their state. Life was varied and full of manifold activities. The Aryan villages were built to pattern and they did not develop in a haphazard way. Villages were usually built on a higher tract of land to escape the floods from rivers and they were invariably rectangular in shape. Like the acropolis in the Greek city-states the Indian villages had a place in the centre where the village elders who constituted the 'Panchayat' met to decide disputes and deal justice. Houses were built of earth and bamboo. The ceilings were covered by straw or reeds. Doors were fastened with the help of straps. Houses were simple but clean and served the purpose quite well.

### **Food Habits**

It is within our purview to look into the food habits of our Aryan forefathers as the physical well-being of a people to a large extent depends upon the type of food they consume. Barley and wheat appear to have been the staple food of the Aryans, though flour and butter, preparations of milk, bread, vegetables, roots, fruits and honey were commonly eaten. There was no objection to strong drinks and the Rig Veda gives a picturesque description of how the '*SOMA*'—an intoxicating beverage—was made.

### **Public Health and Sanitation**

We have described earlier in this book the elaborate arrangements made for public health in the cities of the Indus



Valley civilisation. Similarly from the accounts left by later writers, we can deduce that the people who lived in Vedic times took great care of their public health and sanitary arrangements. We have repeatedly emphasised the necessity of a good system of public health and sanitation for the physical welfare of a nation. The physical and mental well-being of a land is the natural corollary of an efficient system of sanitation, hygiene and public health. The student of the history of Physical Education cannot help marvelling at the excellence of the public health organisation which existed in our country in those far-off days.

Regarding conditions of life in ancient India the Dharma-sutras and the Dharmasastras agree in the main as to the various regulations for maintaining public health in towns. Gautama rules that the use and sale of bad milk and bad flesh must be punished severely (ch. XVII). The committing of nuisance in public roads and in sacred spots such as rivers, temples, shady places, before fire, women and Brahmins was punished (Yajnavalkya I-134-136). People were prohibited from spoiling the waters by saliva, blood or other kinds of impurities (Sukra II-37-47, Vashista II-13). The conception of pure and good drinking water as the first essential for good health has been realised in our country from remote times. The dwellings of the poor though simple were clean. The spirit of plain living and high-thinking pervaded the people in all walks of life.

In this context it is worth noting some features of public life in England as late as the fourteenth century A.D. Describing the life of the English citizens in the fourteenth century, an English historian writes : "There was no regular system of scavenging in towns ; all kinds of filth got heaped up in corners and by-lanes. The crows were the only scavengers ; and in this character they were never molested. There were no pavements and streets were dimly and brokenly lighted by

oil-lanterns drawn up by strings to the end of poles, or even hoisted on church-steeple and towers. Food was consumed in large quantities, but badly cooked".<sup>1</sup>

Observing the conditions of life in London during the 17th century A.D., the same historian continues, "London was at that time a city of narrow streets, overhanging houses, and no drainage of any systematic kind. . . . Into the ill-drained and narrow streets of London neither light nor fresh air could easily penetrate."<sup>2</sup>

In comparison with the conditions of life that existed in England as late as the 14th and 17th centuries, life in ancient India appears to have been far more healthier and hygienic. The Vedic people in addition to the invaluable spiritual message they left as legacy to succeeding generations bequeathed to posterity a fine example of health and organisation. If in the centuries to follow Indian civilisation reached the pinnacle of its greatness, it is in no small measure due to those magnificent people who contributed a great deal to India's prosperity. In the pages that follow, we will examine the state of Physical Education in India during the period of the epics.

### **Physical Education in India in the Epic age**

The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the two great epics of our country. Both of them have grown up with time and have assumed their present form with later additions and interpolations. From the names of the different countries mentioned in Mahabharata and the comparative silence of the

1. A New History of England and Great Britain—By Prof. Meiklejohn, p. 214.

2. A New History of England and Great Britain—By Prof. Meiklejohn, p. 432.



Ramayana as regards the territories south of Vindhya, we are led to believe that the latter is the earlier work. Vyasa is said to have been the author of the Mahabharata and Valmiki of the Ramayana.

### **Usefulness of the Epics from the point of view of Physical Education**

The epics in their essence represent the wars of the Aryans and their expansion into the various parts of India. The Ramayana is the story of the conflict of the Aryans in India with the non-Aryan elements whereas the Mahabharata portrays the struggle among the Aryans themselves. The great battle in the Mahabharata occurred near Delhi and Agra while the Ramayana takes us further south. Both the epics give us useful information regarding the conditions of life in that period. They are invaluable as a source of information for a student of the history of Physical Education. They are replete with the heroic acts and mighty physical exploits of the main characters of the drama and a keen student can draw abundant details as regards the physical activities of the people who lived in that age. The weakness Dharmputra had for gambling was the direct cause for the battle of Kurukshetra in the epic of Mahabharata. The heroes of the epics were men of great physical and mental strength and in fact they represent ideal manhood and are yet a source of inspiration to millions of Indians.

### **Characters in our Epics**

Even the women in the epics possessed extraordinary physical strength and courage. Did not Sita in the Ramayana in the course of her play with her mates, prior to her marriage, effortlessly lift the box that contained the mighty bow which Rama alone succeeded in breaking? Dasaratha's wife 'Keikeyi' helped him on the battlefield and performed



great deeds of courage. Almost all the main male characters of the epics were outstanding athletes and archers. The period of the epics speaks of great physical vigour and strength and from the importance given in both of them for the physical exploits of their heroes, we can safely assume that great attention was paid to the training of body.

### Archery and Body-building

Rama and Lakshmana, the two important characters in the Ramayana, received preliminary instruction in archery from Vashishta and developed it by special training from Vishwamitra. The hero of the Ramayana was the outstanding archer of his day and he never needed a second arrow for hitting his target. He could with a single arrow pierce through seven trees and won his bride by breaking a formidable bow, to lift which, several men were needed. Valmiki speaks with enthusiasm regarding the wonderful physique of Rama and his well-proportioned limbs<sup>1</sup>. The jumping ability of Hanuman is astounding and it taxes our credulity. The elaborate treatment of the battle scenes in both of the epics and the amount of space devoted to the description of the physical features of the contending warriors testify to the importance attached to physical activities and body-building.

1. महोरस्को महेष्वासो गूढजत्रुररिन्दमः ।  
 आजानुबाहुः सुशिराः सुललाटः सुविक्रमः ॥  
 समः समविभक्ताङ्गाः स्निग्धवर्णः प्रतापवान् ।  
 पीनवक्षा विशालाक्षो लक्ष्मीवान् शुभलक्षणः ॥

(Valmiki Ramayana—Balakandam—first chapter, 10th & 11th Slokas)

A great archer and conquerer of foes, he was possessed of an expansive chest, long arms, fair head and shoulders and a noble forehead. His carriage was handsome.

He had a well-developed chest and his strong and handsome limbs were in exquisite proportion. Wide-eyed and of fair complexion, he possessed graceful features and was endowed with great valour.

The hero of the Mahabharata, Arjuna, had none superior to him in archery and he too won his bride by his skill with the bow. Archery then must have been an extremely popular sport and a means of defence. The epic characters, Bhima and Hanuman, were outstanding wrestlers and well may a modern sports writer gather a few hints from the graphic accounts found in the epics regarding the famous bouts in which these heroes figured. Wrestling had been a popular sport in our country from time immemorial and there is no doubt it was so during the age of the epics.

### **Dands and Baithaks**

When in 1927 the greatest of Indian wrestlers, Gama, floored Zebysko, an invincible wrestler, in a matter of seconds to gain the world championship, the whole athletic world stood aghast at the exploit and started to take interest in the Indian form of physical culture. Indian clubs, Dands and Baithaks soon became popular in the gymnasiums all over the world. Even women in America and Germany started practising Indian clubs.

The above exercises are distinctly Indian and very ancient to our country and from the accounts of Veda Vyasa, we can safely deduce that they were popular during the epic days. There is anyhow no room for doubt that the Indian club was practised during the days of the epics, for it is the favourite weapon of Hanuman, Bhima, Duryodhana and scores of other heroes we read about in our great epics.

The Dands and Baithaks are extremely useful in body-building and it cannot be an exaggeration if I say that they have been primarily responsible for the success of Indian wrestlers in the past. The Dands for instance exercise particularly the muscles round the middle of the body, beginning with the small of the back and spine, where the large nerve



centres rest, and using vigorously the abdominal muscles, the side muscles, the hips and the thighs, and all the muscles round the vital portions of the body. According to several authorities it is not in the big arms nor shoulders nor a high chest the vital forces of a man are, but in the centre of the body, the region which is thoroughly exercised by our Dands. Gama was a smaller and lighter man than Zebysko. If there is one exercise in our country that deserves the title of 'national exercise,' it is the 'Dand.'

### **Throwing and Lifting of Weights**

From the extraordinary throwing abilities of the fighting men in the epics, we can assume that lifting weights and throwing them were popular sport. The epic heroes heaved hills and mountains and threw them at each other like peanuts! Hurling of stones has been a popular method of warfare in all countries in ancient days and our epics are not exempt from it. The Marathas in India adopted that mode of warfare as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Exaggeration has been the chief note of all the important epics of the world and in the case of ours, we can substitute heavy weights for the mountains which were lifted by our epic heroes. There is no doubt that lifting and throwing weights were popular sport during the epic age.

### **Swimming and Water Sports**

Also we find the Vanara (monkey) warriors who followed Rama in his expedition perform feats of swinging, climbing and swimming. The strong man of the Mahabharata, Bhima, was a champion swimmer and pages are written to describe the water-sports in which he indulged in the company of his friends.<sup>1</sup>

1. Tradition affirms that in the great battle between Bhima and Duryodhana, the latter took refuge under water and stayed there for a number of days.



## **Comprehensive Physical Activity**

It is significant to note that the physical activities displayed by the characters in our epics represent comprehensively all the fundamental physical activities of man. In addition to such activities, we find several minor and major games which were played by men and women in the days of the epics. The one hundred Kauravas and five Pandavas played various kinds of games of strength, skill and amusement in their childhood under the able supervision of Kripacharya and Drona. A game which is current in several parts of north India, by the name of 'Iti-Dandu' and which is played all over our country today but under different names, was highly popular during the epic days. Bhima in the Mahabharata played it very successfully excelling all his rivals. He could hit a short stick with a long one very powerfully and it was always a problem for his opponents to get him out.

## **Public Tournaments**

Public tournaments and display of skill in arms were common events in the epic age and the following extract from R.C. Dutt's 'Civilisation in Ancient India' throws light upon the sporting events of those days. "Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, never became much of a warrior but became versed in the religious learning of the age and is the most righteous character in the epic. Bhima, the second, learnt to use the club and was renowned for his gigantic size and giant strength and is indeed the 'Ajax' of the story. The third, Arjuna, excelled all other princes in the skill of arms, and aroused the jealousy and hatred of the sons of Dhritarashtra even in their boyhood. Nakula, the fourth, learned to tame horses, and Sahadeva, the fifth, became proficient in astronomy. Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarashtra was proficient in the use of the club and was a rival to Bhima.

"At last the day came for a public exhibition of the pro-

ficiency which the princes had acquired in the use of arms. A spacious area was enclosed. Seats were arranged all round for the accommodation of ancient warriors and chieftains, ladies and courtiers. The whole population of 'Kuruland' flocked to see the skill of the young princes. The blind king Dhritarashtra was led to his seat and foremost among the ladies was Gandhari, queen of Dhritarashtra and Kunti, the mother of the first three Pandavas. The last two were Pandu's sons by another wife.

"There was shooting of arrows at a butt and there was fighting with swords and bucklers and clubs. Duryodhana and Bhima soon began to fight in right earnest and rushed towards each other like mad elephants. Shouts ascended to the sky and soon the fight threatened to have a tragic end. At last the infuriated young men were parted and peace was restored.

"Then the young Arjuna entered the lists in golden mail with his wondrous bow. His splendid archery surprised his passionate admirers and thrilled the heart of his mother with joy, while shouts of admiration rose from the multitude like the roar of the ocean. He played with his sword which flashed like lightning and also with his sharp-edged quoit or 'Chakra' and never missed his mark. Lastly he brought down horses and deer to the ground by the noose and concluded by doing obeisance to his worthy preceptor, Drona, amidst the ringing cheers of the assembled multitude."<sup>1</sup>

### **Other Physical Activities**

Archery, sword fighting, fist-fighting, mace fighting, riding, lifting and throwing of weights and chariot movements must have been some of the popular sports of those days in addition to the fundamental physical activities of man like running, jumping, throwing, climbing and swimming. The Vedic exercises in the

1. "Civilisation in Ancient India," by R.C. Dutt, p. 124.



form of Pranayams and Suryanamaskars were current and formed a part of daily life.

### **Education in Epic Times**

Education in the age of the epics was largely based on the Vedic pattern and the students still learnt under the guidance of a 'Guru' at his home. Studentship began with the ceremony of 'Upanayanam' (thread marriage) which was performed at the ages of 8, 11 and 12 for the Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya pupils respectively. As in Vedic times, a student was a strict 'Brahmacharya' during the period of his education and he underwent a course of discipline as regards dress, food and habits. Absolute physical fitness was a necessary prerequisite for the successful completion of the course of education. The daily duties of the students were strenuous and manifold and no student with a weak constitution could have stood up to it. A student's duties comprised (1) performance of "Sandhya" (a religious rite), Agnihotra, Pranayams, Suryanamaskars etc., (2) tending the sacred fire, (3) begging for his teacher's needs, (4) fetching water, fuel, earth, flowers etc. from the field and forest, and (5) attending to the lectures of his master.

### **Stress on Health**

As a matter of fact our forefathers insisted upon sound health on the part of a student as a condition for his admission into any faculty of learning. For instance, Charaka, a great authority on Ayurveda, emphasises that the physical and mental capacity of every student should be tested before he is admitted to any form of education. A student of medicine should first learn all rules of personal and social hygiene and should be familiar with the causation, course and treatment of any common diseases occurring in the locality. In fact, every student should, from his seventh year, be a student of Ayurveda, literally, the



science of his own life. He should not wait to get this education in a school of medicine.

According to Charaka, every school in the land should be a school of medicine, at which Physical Education should be given as a practical subject. The ideal of the institution should be the development of a healthy and well-formed body of each student. Various arts, industries and sciences could be taught in the schools as subsidiary subjects, according to the capacity of the student and his family traditions, subject always to securing the ideal of robust health of every student. Even at the risk of giving up of everything else, you should protect your body, for, if your body does not exist, everything that exists is non-existent to you. Without health, anything in the world, wealth, fame or position is valueless.

### **Other Subjects for Study**

A student had to study the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Vedangas, Dharma Sastras, Itihasas and Puranas and various other secular subjects. Students were allowed to specialise in particular subjects and the course of study extended to 9, 18, or 36 years depending on the number of subjects he specialised in. The academic year was divided into two terms and the students had holidays on particular occasions besides the terminal holidays.

### **Public Recreation Hall**

The epics tell of a settled life despite constant wars. The city included the king's palace, the court of justice, the public gaming hall, the hall for music and wrestling contests. It had defences, battlements and seven moats. It was laid out in squares. The streets were watered and well-lighted. People indulged themselves in various pastimes and dice-play was extremely popular. All classes of people irrespective of their castes were permitted to use the public recreation hall and there

was a table on which to play dice. Gambling became a favourite entertainment of kings and princes and a royal sport.

### **Description of a Picnic**

We find in the Mahabharata the mention of a picnic. The following description of the fare served therein would well reveal the partiality of the epic people for joy and merriment, good food and the lighter side of life; "cleanly cooks, under the superintendence of diligent stewards, served large pieces of meat roasted on spits, and meat cooked as curries, and sauces made of tamarinds and pomegranates; young buffaloes roasted on spits dressed by dropping ghee thereon; the same fried in ghee seasoned with acids and sochel, salt and sorrel leaves; large haunches of venison boiled in different ways with sorrel and mangoes, and sprinkled over with condiments; shoulders and rounds of animals dressed in ghee well sprinkled over with sea salt and powdered black pepper, and garnished with radishes, pomegranates, lemons, sweet basil, asafoetida, ginger and the herb."<sup>1</sup>

However it should be understood that meat was becoming less popular and it was by no means the staple food of the people in the epic age. It was taken only on special occasions with the sanction of the priests.

### **Increasing Rigidity of Caste-system**

The caste-system was growing more rigid in the epic age and the Brahmins started taking advantage of the protection given to their caste, while they neglected their duty to acquire the knowledge necessary to a Brahmin. The later portion of the age of the epics marks the decadence of the Aryans. With the expansion of their territories, the stalwart Aryans began to rest on their laurels and they grew soft and almost degenerate. A

1. "Indo-Aryans", Vol. II, p. 422.—By Rajendralal Mitra.



long acquaintance with opulence and ease effaced their martial qualities. Priestly interference in the administration of the country led to sloth and corruption and the increasing rigidity of the caste-system and the growth of several new sub-castes undermined the solidarity of the society. It was in this age that prominent law-givers like Manu, Yajnavalkya, Narada and Vishnu wrote their Dharmasastras.

### **Restriction of the Powers of the King**

One redeeming feature of these disruptive forces was the limitation of the powers of the king at least in theory. The king had no right except that which was conferred upon him by the Aryan law and he could be fined or deposed by the general assembly of the free men, or by the council of ministers, if he neglected his duties as king or offended that law.

### **Brahmin-Kshatriya Rivalry and its Significance**

The influence of the Brahmin caste was fast rising and they started challenging the supremacy of the Kshatriyas, the political and military rulers, on the ground that the strict discipline of the mind and body which was a fundamental principle of Aryan philosophy was as indispensable for success in war and politics as it was for the spiritual development of those who sought divine truth. This age marked the beginning of the duel for supremacy between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas and the former class no longer confined themselves strictly to matters of religion but took a keen part in the polity of the state. We hear of great Brahmin warriors like Drona and Parasurama and just as they were counsellors to the kings in matters of spirit they were also—some of them—instructors to the Kshatriyan princes in warfare. Thus we hear of 'Karna' in the Mahabharata who learnt archery under Parasurama and the Pandava princes who received instructions in the use of arms under Drona. This growing rivalry between the two primary classes of the Aryan society is significant from the following points of view.



It could mean that the Aryan genius for organisation and sublime philosophy could not tolerate the triumph of mere physique, overlooking the other dominant factors of human personality. Though the Brahmins, when they sought to interfere in the management of the state, were playing a role not their own, it must be said to their credit that they never claimed for themselves the prerogatives of the kingly office, but only special rights as the kings' advisers and friends. The laws of Manu, a code drawn up by and for the Brahmins reserves for Kshatriyas, the power and position of sovereignty. The Brahmins as counsellors to kings did great service and their contribution to the art and literature of this country cannot easily be overlooked. Aryan philosophy has always negated the claim of physique alone for dominance in the world and well it might be that the Brahmins who represented the intellectual elements of the society were reluctant to yield to the Kshatriyas the ultimate superiority on the claim of Kshatriyas' strength and skill in the use of weapons. E.B. Havell writes, "It must be admitted that, theoretically at least, there was much force in the Brahmin contention. The attempt to enforce ethical considerations in the conduct of state policy, which was the justification of the position of the 'Purohita' at the right hand of the war-lord was the ground upon which the Christian Church in Europe asserted its claim for temporal power and privileges."<sup>1</sup>

### **Its Lesson for Students of Physical Education**

The above phase of the Brahmin-Kshatriya contest is not without its lesson to the student of the history of Physical Education in India, for it emphasises beyond doubt the existence of a doctrine in ancient India that however good a ruler was in the strength of his body, he was ill-qualified to rule his people if he did not measure up in his mental and spiritual attainments.

1. Aryan Rule in India—By E.B. Havell, p. 268.

There can be no better illustration for the existence of the idea that human personality in its one-sided development was insufficient for the wielding of power. The superiority of the king lay in his valour (*Virya Sreshthascha Rajanah-Mahabharatha*, 136, 19) but his valour would be of no avail if he did not possess equal powers of mind and soul.

### **Greek Ideal compared to the Ideal of our Epics**

We have earlier in this work paid our tribute to the philosophers of Greece for their able interpretation of the principles of education. The Greeks did not accept anything as education which did not satisfy the requirements of body, mind and soul. The philosophy of our epics further ennoble the ideal of education by adding one another condition. In the battle-field of Kurukshetra, Krishna emphasises the need of '*Dharma*' in addition to the three factors enumerated by the masters of Athens. Human conduct must in addition to the factors of body, mind and soul should be governed by '*Dharma*'. The meaning of '*Dharma*' does not easily lend itself for translation in English. It is something peculiarly Indian and the superiority of the epic definition of the perfection of human personality consists in the fact that they laid strong emphasis upon this quality. The forces that lost the issue in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata did not lack the three aspects of human personality which the Greeks stressed upon. Ravana in the Ramayana was dreaded even by the gods for his unexampled strength and courage. He was a very great scholar and master in all the arts of his day. He possessed extraordinary powers of soul and increased them by unheard of austerities and penance to a level when the gods themselves grew jealous of him. But he lost the battle against Rama as he was inferior to his foe in the sphere of *Dharma*. So did Duryodhana lose his fight though he was aided by the greatest warriors of the day.

## **Birth of Bhagavat Gita**

The gem of Indian philosophy was imparted on a battlefield where strength dominates. 'Bhagavat Gita', the most popular Indian philosophical work, is based on the advice given by Krishna to his disciple Arjuna on the battlefield. It is significant to note that the highest form of Indian philosophy was born on a battlefield in the midst of two powerful armies facing each other. The setting of the scene of the greatest single philosophical treatise of India on a battlefield where strength and physique dominate could well be a practical illustration of the fact that in ancient India mind and body functioned together and a great importance was attached to the combination of these two factors.

The next phase of our study relates to the physical activities of the people in the Buddhist and Mauryan times.



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## **CHAPTER III**

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN BUDDHIST TIMES**

We now come out of that misty period, the Vedic and Epic ages in which chronological points are vaguely fixed by millenniums and centuries instead of by years, to the sixth century before the Christian era, from which time a more or less complete sequence of the chronological data have been collected by studious oriental scholars and archaeologists.

The chief events which occurred round about this period are the birth of Buddhism, the raid of Alexander the great into India and the establishment of Mauryan rule in Magadha. We will now proceed to examine each of them briefly from the point of view of Physical Education.

#### **Buddhism as a Religion**

Buddhism was by no means a new religion. The founder of the religion, Gautama, who was a Kshatriya prince did not have any pretensions for originality. In its essence it is nothing but a restatement of Vedic doctrines eschewing nevertheless certain of the undesirable elements found in Hinduism as it existed then. Buddhism is more a social than a religious revolution and it attacked the sacrificial rites and mysticism that surrounded the then Hinduism. It contained an appeal to the masses and breathed democratic elements into religion.

#### **Service of Buddhism to Physical Education**

We saw in the previous chapter the conflict that was grow-



ing between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, the two leading classes of the Aryan community and as to the idea that Buddhism represented the challenge of the Kshatriyas to the established supremacy of the Brahmins, we have nothing to say, as it is in no way directly related to our survey of the history of Physical Education in India in the ancient days. But it is important for the student of Physical Education to remember that Buddhism in its essence opposed the practice of self-torture by which it was then believed that both gods and men acquired spiritual insight and command over the forces of nature. It was in the form of a reaction to the ascetic ideal of Hinduism, and thereby it did great service to the cause of Physical Education in ancient India.

### **Excessive Piety of Buddhism**

Buddhism laid enormous emphasis on 'Ahimsa' or non-violence. The edicts of Ashoka, the most enthusiastic of the royal Buddhist-supporters, contain injunctions against ill-treatment and slaughter of various kinds of animals including the queen ants. In the view of many historians the excessive humanity of Buddhism and that of its royal supporters, specially Asoka, dissipated the energy and vitality of the people and made them too soft to participate actively and energetically in the affairs of life. In the words of a famous historian, "the pious inclination of an impressionable people to imitate the example of the great Renunciation had such an injurious effect upon social order that penalties were imposed upon any man leaving his wife and family without adequate provision for their support and the prestige of the Sangha (Buddhist religious order) withdrew the best part of the manhood of Magadha—the central province of the empire—into a monastic life, so that in after times, it was known as 'Vihara'—the land of monastries."<sup>1</sup>

1. 'Aryan Rule in India' —By E. B. Havell, p. 101.

There is truth in the above assertion and we cannot easily dismiss the fact that the influence of Buddhism made the people passive in outlook. We observed earlier in this book how the canons of the Vedas did not prohibit the eating of animal food. Both Manu and Yajnavalkya in their Dharma-sastras permitted it. There is no doubt as to the fact that India today would be predominantly non-vegetarian in its food habits but for the influence of Buddhism. Asoka, the mighty king of Magadha, gave up warfare after the battle of Kalinga and swore not to shed blood for glory. In the long period of his reign there was no other battle of any note and the country enjoyed peace. It is quite conceivable that a long period of uninterrupted peace coupled with the excessive emphasis of non-violence in all walks of life told upon the martial qualities of the Magadhan troops and the stubbornness of the people in general. As anything associated with force was discredited, it is possible that the arts of offence and defence fell into disuse. As physical culture in the ancient days was allied to military science, it might have also suffered at the hands of Buddhism. In the absence of a systematic work detailing the conditions of life in those days, it is difficult for us to venture any conclusion.

### **Physical Activities of Buddha**

But the contention that nations unused to constant battles do not produce healthy and strong citizens is falsified by historic evidences and several nations enjoying long periods of rest and peace have produced citizens of the best order. Therefore it would be erroneous to assume that the prevalence of Buddhism was totally inimical to the interests of physical activities. We have plenty of evidence to prove it. As a matter of fact the founder of Buddhism, prince 'Siddhartha', later known as the Buddha, was in his younger days a sportsman of no mean order. Here is an account of the description of Hieun Tsang, the



Chinese pilgrim, who visited India in the seventh century A.D. "Continuing his description, the pilgrim relates the outside of the south gate of the city, and on the left side of the road was a 'TOPE' to mark the spot at which the prince (Buddha) competing in athletic accomplishments with the other 'Sakyas' shot at iron-drums. His arrow pierced the drums, went thirty-two 'li' to south-east and penetrated the ground up to the top causing a clear spring of water to gush forth. . . . Prince Siddhartha practised several manly sports and excelled in exercises.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that facts are mixed with tradition in the narration of the pious Chinese pilgrim but none can question the fact that archery was a popular pastime of princes when Siddhartha was a young man. To quote the same source again, "Of all the Sakyas who were competitors in the military exercises, Nanda and Devadatta were practically the only rivals to Siddhartha, the future Buddha ; their strength and skill were very great but they were far surpassed by the superhuman achievements of their cousin."<sup>2</sup>

### **Kinds of Physical Activities.**

A Buddhist tract contains a list of things a member of the order would not do and among them is a list of games, one of which is called "AKKHARIKA" (Lettering) explained as "guessing at letters traced in the air or on a play-fellow's back". As the context gives a number of children's games, this was almost certainly regarded as such. Further the Chinese pilgrims who visited India, state that the following games and physical activities were current in the Buddhist universities like Nalanda : (1) swimming, (2) hopping over diagrams marked on the ground, (3) removing substances one by one from a heap without dis-

1. "On Yuan Chwang", By S. Beal. Oriental Translation Fund, p. 79.

2. "On Yuan Chwang", By S. Beal. Oriental Translation Fund, p. 79.



turbing the remaining ones, (4) trap-ball games, (5) tossing of balls, (6) competitions at ploughing with miniature ploughs, (7) archery contests, (8) shooting marbles, (9) guessing other people's thoughts, (10) chariot driving, (11) elephant-riding, (12) sword-fighting, (13) wrestling, and (14) boxing with fists.<sup>1</sup>

### **Science of Yoga**

The doctrine of Yoga was popular in Buddhist times and Buddha had practised it. Yoga in its literal sense was a system of religious meditation which connoted the Vedic doctrine of the supreme soul. By about the second century before Christ, Patanjali the Sanskrit grammarian systematised the science of Yoga. Though it was predominantly spiritual in its contents, it was accompanied by certain physical movements. The Yoga Sutra comprises of four chapters and the second chapter deals with the practices and exercises required in meditation. Some form of breath control is described. It has been edited and translated into English by Dr. Rajindralal Mitra, who also gives a brief abstract of its contents in his preface. The work, however, is too full of superstition and religious mysticism to be of much practical value. Yoga as it is known in modern India is different from that practised by Buddha in search of truth. Modern physical educationists have tried to adopt it to the needs of this age by introducing changes in it. The system is practised in hundreds of our schools today and by several thousands of our citizens in all walks of life. There cannot be much difference of opinion as to the fact that the yogic exercises possess a certain amount of therapeutic value but a lot of research yet remains to be done to assess their possibilities and to establish them on a more solid and scientific base.

### **Corrective Physical Exercises**

The idea that physical ailments of men and women could be

1. Cited in the Encyclopedia of Indian Physical Culture—Editor D.C. Mujumdar, p. 15-16.

cured by physical exercises is very ancient in our country and authorities of medicine in ancient India like Charakacharya and Susruta prescribed particular exercises suitable for various disorders. Describing his treatment for Diabetes, Charaka says that the disease is caused by overeating and want of exercise. According to him it could be cured by prescribing to the patient physical exercises of various types suitable to his constitution, by rubbing his body with various substances prescribed in the texts, by massaging the limbs in a scientific manner, by plunge and shower baths, by spounging and spraying, by the application of pastes *etc.*

Susruta gives in greater detail the types of physical exercises that have to be prescribed to each individual. In prescribing physical exercises to any patient, consideration is to be given regarding his *Vayas* (age), *BALA* (strength), *SARIRA* (constitutional tendencies), *DESA* (country in which he lives and the part of the body to be developed), *KALA* (season of the year), and *ASANA* (food). Otherwise indiscriminate *Vyayam* may give rise to new disorders.

वयोबलशरीराणि देशकाकशनानि च  
समीक्ष्यकुर्याद्विभायामम् ।  
अन्यथा रोगमाप्नुयात् ।

Even in a case of advanced Diabetes, *Vyayam* or physical exercises, *NYUDDHA* (boxing), *KREEDA* (indoor and outdoor games), riding on elephants, horses, or chariots, marching on foot, sword and stick-play and similar bodily exercises are to be resorted to.

### University of Takshasila

Takshasila was a famous seat of education and it attracted students from all parts of the country and also from outside. Archery was one of the important subjects taught in the university of Takshasila and it is reported that as many as 163



princes coming from various parts of the country learnt archery there. Morning periods were specially devoted to Dhanur Veda or the science of archery. Swimming must have been a favourite pastime in those days, for the Chinese pilgrim says that "every morning a bell is sounded to remind the priests of their bathing hour, and sometimes a hundred, sometimes even a thousand priests used to leave the monastery together and proceed in all directions towards a number of great pools of water near Nalanda where all of them took baths."<sup>1</sup> A cold water bath in the morning must have been obligatory at the prescribed hour everyday.

We can therefore conclude that physical activities did not receive a serious setback in the Buddhist period though as a religion Buddhism was pacific and non-violent in its outlook.<sup>2</sup>

### **Jainism and Physical Activities**

Though Jainism as a religion was equally pacific like Buddhism, we find in the literature pertaining to the sect frequent mention of physical activities. Several of the kings devoted to the faith were fine sportsmen and in the 'Antagada-Dasao and Anuttarovavaiya Dasao' translated by L.D. Barnett from Prakrit, we read about the physical activities of the king Andhaga Vanhi. To quote Barnett: "Then, king Andhaga Vanhi at break of day rose up from his couch and stepped down from the dais. He went to the place where the gymnasium was and entered into the gymnasium. There he wearied, tired and forspent himself with manifold exercises of energy, leaping, limb-twisting, wrestling and turning (*Anega, Vayama, Jogga-vaggana-Vamaddana-malla-juddha-karanehim*) ; then he was smeared with anointing stuffs of a hundred and a thousand, inspiring,

1. Itsing—O.C., pp. 101-109.

2. Look to the following verse from *Dhammapada*: "Health is the greatest gain contentment is the greatest wealth, faith is the best friend and *Nirvana* is the greatest happiness." (Cited by Radha-Krishnan, *Bhagavad Gita*, p. 129)



gladdening, strengthening, rejoicing all the organs and limbs ; then on the oiling-skin he was rubbed down by men with tender and delicate palms on perfect hands and feet, men skilful, dexterous, accomplished, clever, wise, possessed of cunning art, masters of the modes of anointing, rubbing and turning, with fourfold rubbing pleasant to the bones, to the flesh, to the skin and the hair. Then when his faintness and fatigue were gone, he stepped out of the gymnasium and went to the place where the bath-house was and entered into the bath house.”<sup>1</sup>

Yoga Sastra was quite popular among the followers of this sect and even saints who gave up every connection with the secular world practised regular Yogic exercises. We hear the graphic mention of the different postures involved in these exercises.<sup>2</sup>

Various kinds of activities embracing all the fundamental physical activities of man are mentioned in Jainese literature and the following account would throw light upon the popularity of physical activities. Discussing the activities of Ajita and Sagara during their youth, Hemachandra writes : “Before him he rode horses, even wild ones, with or without a saddle, with five gaits. He exhibited to the Lord the shooting of a doll on a wheel, shooting an invisible object by sound, the shooting at a target in water, the shooting of a clay-ball on a wheel with arrows. He showed Padagali, carrying a sword and shield, having entered the shield like the moon in a cloud. He whirled rapidly a lance, spear and club, giving the appearance of a fiery streak of lightning, revolving in the sky. He showed him knife-science with all the knife-positions, expert in all the steps, like a dancer showing a dance. From devotion to his teacher and a

1. The Antagada-Dasao And Anuttarovavaiya-Dasao (p, 20. L.D. Barnett's translation).

2. See pp. 7-8, Trisastisalaka Purusacaritra by Acharya Hemachandra. Translation by H.M. Johnson—Book II, Ch. I.

desire to be taught by him he showed Ajita Svamin his skill in other weapons also.”<sup>1</sup>

The popularity of cock-fighting is evidenced by the following account of Hemachandra in Santinatha Charitra : “The king agreed and queen Manorama at once had a servant girl bring her cock, named Vajratunda. The two were set down on the ground and attacked each other, dancing with various steps like foot-soldiers in an exhibition. They flew up and fell down, they advanced and retreated, they gave and took blows mutually. The crests, though red, of these two fine cocks, became red from blood produced by cruel blows with bills and feet.”<sup>2</sup>

Interesting games and sports for children which include broad jump and high jump are referred to by the same author.<sup>3</sup> We also hear the mention of various water sports.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the above details Jaina Sutra, Part I, quotes ‘Kundinpura’ as a seat of learning in which specialised training in gymnastics was given.

### **Raid of Alexander into India**

The Indian invasion of Alexander the great is significant from the point of view of our account of the physical activities of our people, though the political consequences of the raid have not left a permanent trace in our history. The importance of his raid has been somewhat over-stated by the Greek writers. The indifference with which India regarded this event is well-illustrated by Mathew Arnold who sings :

1. Trisastisalaka Purusacaritra by Acharya Hemachandra Translation by H.M. Johnson—Book II, Ch. III, p. 71.

2. Trisastisalaka Purusacaritra by Acharya Hemachandra. Translation by H.M. Johnson—Book V, Vol. III, p. 279.

3. Trisastisalaka Purusacaritra by Acharya Hemachandra. Translation by H.M. Johnson—Book IV, Vol. III, p. 68.

4. Trisastisalaka Purusacaritra by Acharya Hemachandra,—Book V, Vol. III, p. 263.



“The East bowed low before the blast  
 In patient, deep disdain.  
 She let the legions thunder past,  
 and plunged in thought again.”

The political significance of Alexander's raid solely consists in the fact that it paved the way for the establishment of Mauryan rule in India. But from the point of view of our subject, Alexander's raid revealed to the world the excellence of the Indian soldier and his fighting abilities. Alexander who had an easy run of victories earlier, when he set his eyes on the magnificent array of PORUS, who offered him battle, is reported to have exclaimed “I see at last a danger that matches my courage. It is at once with wild beasts and men of uncommon mettle that the contest now lies.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Opposition to Alexander in India**

The amount of resistance Alexander encountered in India was considerable. R. K. Mookerji writes: “The amount of Indian opposition offered to it at different centres, in regions beyond the Indus, or in the land of the five rivers or in the region of the lower Indus, was not negligible. There was in evidence all over this vast area a general spirit of patriotism instigating resistance to foreign invasion. Perhaps it lacked leadership and resources. It was more in evidence in the lowly than in the high places. Many of the kings with few notable exceptions turned traitors and purchased their position by accommodation with the enemy. But not so were the free peoples of the Punjab, whose love of freedom and self-sacrifice in its defence constitute some of the brightest features of Indian history.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Indian Mode of Warfare**

Arrian, the Greek historian, gives the following description of the Indian mode of warfare: “The foot soldiers carry a bow

1. McCrindle, *Invasion*—p. 209.

2. *Hindu Civilisation*, R.K. Mookerji—p. 169.



made of equal length with the man who bears it. This they rest upon the ground and pressing against it with their left foot, thus discharge the arrow having drawn the string far backwards, for the shaft they use is little short of being three yards long and there is nothing which can resist an Indian archer's shot; neither shield nor breast-plate nor any stronger defence if such there be. In their left hands they carry bucklers made of undressed ox-hide which are not so broad as those who carry them but are about as long. Some are equipped with javelins instead of bows, but wear a sword which is broad in the blade, but not longer than three cubits and this when they engage in close fight (which they do with reluctance) they wield with both hands to fetch down a lustier blow. The horsemen are equipped with two lances like the lances called 'Saunia' and with a shorter buckler than that carried by the foot-soldiers. For they do not put saddles on their horses; nor do they curb them with bits, in use among the Greeks or the Kelts, but they fit on round the extremity of the horses' mouth a circular piece of stitched raw ox-hide, studded with pricks of iron or brass pointing inwards, but not very sharp; if a man is rich he uses pricks made of ivory."<sup>1</sup>

### **High Quality of the Indian Soldiery**

The fighting qualities of the Indian troops and their skill in the use of various arms took the Greeks by surprise as the following Greek opinion of the Indian warriors shows: "In the art of war they were far superior to the other nations by which Asia was at the time inhabited." As a matter of fact the result of the battle between PORUS and Alaxender might have been otherwise if luck had properly aided the former. The Indians on the evidence of the Greek writers themselves were in no way inferior in strength, valour or skill in the use of arms. The issue of the battle was settled by fate. The battlefield was soaked by

1. McCrindle's translations as cited by R. C. Dutt in "Civilisation in Ancient India", p. 225.

heavy rain and in the darkness of a stormy night the Greeks had already crossed the river in stealth. And on the battlefield, to quote Curtius, the rain "had rendered the ground slippery and unfit for horses to ride over, while the chariots kept sticking in the muddy sloughs formed by the rain and proved almost immovable from their great weight. The charioteers were hurled from their seats when the chariots, in rushing into action, jolted over broken and slippery ground. The infantry were unable even to use their arrows. These weapons were so long and heavy that the archers could not readily adjust them on the string unless by first resting their bow upon the ground. Then as the ground was slippery and hindered their efforts, the enemy had time to charge them before they could deliver their blows."<sup>1</sup>

According to R. K. Mookerji, the volume and intensity of Indian opposition to Alexander have not been duly assessed and praised by the Greek writers. The Indians on the whole offered a brave opposition to the advancing army of Alexander and the intensity of feeling among the inhabitants against the intrusion of an alien can be gauged by the fact that not only the warrior classes but even the Brahmins of the country called 'Sogdi' or 'Sodrai' rose against Alexander and all of them were put to the sword.

### **Bravery and Physical Excellence of Porus**

The story of the magnificent conduct of Porus on the battlefield is too well known to every student to merit repetition. When thousands of his men lay dead on the field including his two sons, the valiant Indian king Paurava continued hurling his javelins from his mighty war elephant and did not, after the manner of Darius the Persian emperor, abandon the field and show his men the first example of flight. When all was lost he left the field with nine wounds on his body but did not leave behind his

1. The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great, J.W. McCrindle, p. 208.



pride. For when a man with a message from his conquerer galloped after him, he hurled at him a javelin recognising him to be the traitor king of Taxila who had joined the foe. Porus indeed was a champion athlete and fine figure of a man, towering over six feet. Greek writers are full of admiration for his superb physique and noble conduct and Alexander who had the innate ability of a Greek in his appreciation of the valour of a fallen foe paid his tributes to the Indian king as one sportsman to another. He struck a coin with the figure of brave Porus hurling his javelin at his brother king from Taxila! That was indeed a tribute paid by Alexander to Indian manhood and valour.

### **Alexander's Raid comes as a Revelation**

The invasion of Alexander, though it did not contain in itself any lasting influence on Indian polity, has got a special significance from the point of view of the student of the history of Physical Education in India, in as much as it put to a test the worth of Indian soldiers. The system of physical culture and activities practised by Indians far back from the Vedic and Epic days was under a challenge. East met West on the battlefield and the issue had to be settled. It was not the first occasion when the Indians met the Greeks on a battlefield. Long before the entry of Alexander into India, Indian archers had levelled their bows against the Greeks and shot at them their irresistible iron-tipped arrows. For, Herodotus tells us that the army of XERXES, the son of Darius, had a contingent of Indian archers who helped him in his fight against the Greeks.

The Greeks of course had a triumphant march in our country and proved the worth of their arms, but their encounter with the Indians brought home the truth that there was nothing wrong with the system of our physical culture. Indians lost the issue due to the superior military tactics of Alexander and due to the lack of proper organisation and leadership in their armies.



In addition it should be understood that several rulers deserted our cause and joined the ranks of the enemies.

The huge war-elephants and the heavy chariots in our armies hindered their effective manoeuvre. The elephants when wounded often turned against their own protectors. The ineffectiveness of the elephant corps is testified by Alexander himself who says "as for the elephants, we had an example before our eyes in the late battle when they charged more furiously upon their own ranks than upon ours and when their vast bodies were cut and mangled by our bills and axes. If one or two of them be wounded, the rest swerve aside and take to flight. When so many thousands of them are crowded together, they cannot but hamper each other when their huge unwieldy bodies want room either to stand or turn."

Therefore the cause of our defeat lay more in the superior tactics of the Greeks and their equipment. Neither the Indian soldier in himself was inferior to the Greek nor the age-long system of physical activities which made him a soldier was a disappointment. At the time Alexander came into India, she had developed a highly organised system of physical culture inferior in no way to that of the visitors.

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## CHAPTER IV

### PHYSICAL CULTURE IN MAURYAN INDIA

The next important phase of this period of our history as we mentioned earlier is the establishment of the Mauryan empire. As for most historians this is the only lasting political consequence of Alexander's invasion. Chandragupta is the founder of the Mauryan dynasty which lasted from 321 to 184 B.C. These 150 years form one of the most glorious chapters in our history and from the point of view of our history of Physical Education, it is important.

Chandragupta Maurya was the contemporary of Alexander the Great and it is quite probable that he knew the latter. At the time of Alexander's occupation of Takshasila, Chandragupta was there and later when Alexander died, he fell upon and annihilated most of his garrisons and then marching against Pataliputra, overthrew the Magadhan king who was ruling there. Chandragupta in his accession to power is said to have been ably assisted by a Brahmin named Kautilya who was also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta. Two sources of information give a clear idea of his reign. They are the records of Megasthenes<sup>1</sup> and a book called Arthasastra written by Kautilya. The material for this survey of the history of Physical Education in Mauryan times is largely based upon the above works.

Chandragupta was an able soldier and an astute diplomat.

1. MEGASTHENES was a Greek officer of SELEUKUS who was sent to the Court of Chandragupta.

He quickly consolidated his empire and increased the strength of his armies. He was well-versed with the Greek method of warfare and later when Seleukus, one of Alexander's generals, sought to add to his dominions the Indian provinces, he inflicted such a crushing defeat upon the Greek that he was not only forced to retire hastily but also to give his daughter in marriage to the Indian monarch. Chandragupta's victory over Seleukus redeemed the prestige of Indian arms which suffered a little at the hands of Alexander.

### **Physical Activities of the Period**

During the long reign of Chandragupta, his large domains enjoyed peace and prosperity chiefly due to the wise administration of his able minister Kautilya. Great progress was made in all branches of human activity including physical culture. The common forms of sports in Mauryan times were archery; swimming; boating; hunting; wrestling; dice-games; gymnastics etc. Display of arms of Kshatriya chivalry; rhinoceros, elephant, ram and bull fights; chariot-racing with horses and oxen yoked together and hunting were the principal amusements of the court.

### **Sanitation and Hygiene in Pataliputra**

Pataliputra was the capital of the Mauryans and it was a magnificent city. The palace of the king according to Megasthenes was more splendid than the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana. The city had a long river frontage as was the case of all Aryan cities and the beauty of its parks and the splendour of its buildings were proverbial in India. It was known as the city of flowers and the home of learning and wealth. The city was ably administered by a council which looked after sanitation, water supply, the provision and upkeep of public buildings, gardens etc. The by-laws of the city imposed fines upon persons defiling public roads or reservoirs, or for allowing dead animals or human corpses to pollute public



places. Special routes were prescribed for funeral processions and no corpses were allowed to be buried or cremated except in the public cemeteries or cremation-grounds.

### Medical Facilities

There were hospitals for both man and beast. Medical aid was given on an adequate and large scale. Various measures were taken to prevent the spreading of diseases throughout the land. Adulterated articles of food as also adulterated medicines, if administered, were severely dealt with (Arthashastra, Book IV, Sec. i.) Mention is made of four classes of medical experts including midwives and nurses, army surgeons, as well as a number of medicinal drugs and herbs and surgical instruments. Megasthenes testifies to the care and attention with which medical aid was given to the foreigners when they fell ill. India has always treated the foreigner with consideration. It is reported that Alexander consulted Indian physicians when he was here. The Buddhist Jatakas mention distinctly that special lectures were delivered in medicine and surgery in the universities of Benares and Takshasila. Kautilya recommends punishments to physicians who treated patients with carelessness. Regulations as to dress and beddings demonstrate in a large measure the utmost care bestowed upon the health of the citizens. The Mauryans had complete trust in the motto :

शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्

*viz.*, that a sound physique is a necessary pre-requisite for the pursuit of Dharma.

In short, Pataliputra in the fourth century before Christ appears to have been a thoroughly well-organised city, and administered according to the best principles of social science.

### Massaging

Massaging of body seems to have been extensively practised

in Mauryan times and Chandragupta himself was very fond of it. Four attendants massaged his body with ebony rollers when he gave audiences and attended to administrative affairs.

Massaging in our country has been practised from time immemorial and almost all authors of medical science in ancient India refer to its usefulness with enthusiasm. An oil-bath once or twice a week is a national habit in our country and it has been practised for ages. It is an elementary form of massaging. According to our ancients, daily oil-bath removes old age, tiresomeness and pains in the body. It improves eye-sight and gives plumpiness to the body. It induces good sleep, gives complexion to the skin and strength to the body. In short, it prolongs life. If there is one treatment which makes a stout man lean and a lean man stout, it is massage and oil bath. The stout man loses his fat by improved circulation and the lean man gets plumpy by improved nutrition of his skin and muscle. Oil bath is a rejuvenator and beautifier. In Tamil there is a familiar proverb: "If you pay the oilman whatever you give to the physician, there will be no need of a physician."

After a person finishes his physical exercise he is advised to have his whole body well massaged.<sup>1</sup> The secret of Indian wrestlers keeping up their strength to a very late age is attributed to efficient massaging. Charaka divides massage into three kinds : (1) MARDANAM (athletic massage) ; 2. SAMVAHANAM (medical massage) ; 3. UTSADANAM and KESAMARDANAM (hygienic massage).

In Mardanam the movements are done with considerable force and reinforced friction is resorted to. One resists the movements of the other so that individual muscles contract at each stroke. The object of medical massage is to give comfort

1. तत्कृत्वा तु सुखं देहं विमृद्नीयात् समन्ततः ॥

(Susruta Samhita, Ch. 24).



to the patient, to improve circulation and to promote absorption of inflammatory exudations or swellings. It induces sleep, removes obesity and pains in the body and relieves fatigue. It promotes development of muscle, blood and colour of the skin. In medical massage, the oil is applied very gently to the parts and the stroking and other operations are done in a most comfortable manner. This is a passive massage, whereas athletic massage is a deep and active massage in which no resistance is offered. Hygienic massage is intended to clean the skin and to tone up the nerves.

It is really amazing to observe the high proficiency attained by our ancients in the art of massaging and the deep knowledge they possessed regarding the working of human body. Almost all forms of modern massaging were in vogue in ancient India and they were fully versed in the intricacies of the technique.<sup>1</sup> Ancient medical texts give detailed description as regards the processes involved in this art of massaging. Following are briefly some of the forms of massage.

Anulepanam (lubrication), Gharsanam (friction), Udharshanam (re-inforced friction), Utsadanam (rubbing), Udvar-tanam (Wickrolling), Lata Veshtanam (Spiral friction), Pidanam (kneading), Avapidanam or Prapidanam (deep kneading), Udveshtanam (wringing), Maudhanam (muscle rolling), Pari-peedanam (petrissage), Sandhi Ehalanam (joint movement), Sandamiskam (pulling), Harspaham (vibration), Praharanam (percussion), Chedyam (hacking), Tadanam (spatting),

1. Susruta recommends that the rubbing is to be performed with greater pressure upwards i.e. towards the heart, from the wrist to shoulder and from the foot to the hip.

उद्धर्तनं वातहरं कफमेदोविलापनम् ।

स्थिरीकरणमङ्गानां त्वक्प्रसादकरं परम् ॥

(Susruta Samhita, Ch. 24, Slokam 51.)

Samputakam (thumping), Vadyam (tapping), Aspalanam (clapping), Marjanam (stroking), Kesamardhanam (shampooing the hair).

In addition to the above processes Charaka mentions Swedanam (sweating of the body as a form of massage). There are two forms of 'Swedanam' (1) SAGNISWEDAM (with the help of fire) and (2) NIRGANISWEDAM (without the help of fire). Again he divides SAGNISWEDAM into 13 kinds and NIRAGNISWEDAM into 10 kinds. These processes of Swedanam described by the famous Indian physician formed the basis of the various kinds of baths which obtained great fame later in Roman and Turkish histories.

### **Education**

That education was widely spread in Mauryan times is witnessed by Magasthenes. Teaching was in the hands of brahmins and Buddhist monks. It was mainly literary and religious in character and consisted in the study of Dharma-sastras, grammar and rhetoric, politics, and economics. Technical education was imparted through the guilds. The allusion to engineers and officers who looked after machinery, state control of mining, metallurgy and other professions requiring high technical skill apart from weaving, dyeing and carpentry, show that training in such professions requiring high skill was undertaken on a large scale. Unfortunately we do not know much about the education and status of women but from the fact that Chandragupta employed women archers as his body-guards, we may conclude that women enjoyed considerable freedom and engaged themselves in various kinds of physical activities.

### **Education of the Nobility**

Special attention was bestowed on the education of princes and it was considered incomplete if the prince had not either himself studied or heard the Itihasas read to him. Besides, he was taught the various branches of military science relating



to the use and handling of different arms. That the king must possess activity and physical vigour in an eminent degree is repeated by Kautilya in several places in his Arthasastra. Regular time-tables were drawn to regulate the course of his study. The mention of a time-table reminds us of the duties of the king which were also governed by similar time-tables. The following is recommended by the Arthasastra. According to it the day and night are divided into eight periods respectively when the king is expected to fulfil the respective functions marked out.

### DAY

6 to 7.30 A.M.	Supervising receipt and expenditure.
7.30 to 9 A.M.	Affairs of citizens and people.
9 to 10.30 A.M.	Bathing, physical exercises, Vedic chanting and eating.
10.30 to 12 Noon	Affairs of the officers of the state.
12 to 1-30 P.M.	Council with ministers and confidential agents.
1.30 to 3 P.M.	Recreation and rest.
3 to 4.30 P.M.	Supervising the army.
4.30 to 6 P.M.	Discussions regarding enemies and military operations.
6 to 7.30 P.M.	Receiving intelligence officers and others.
7.30 to 9 P.M.	Physical activities, bathing, eating and prayers.
9 to 1.30 A.M.	Music and sleep.
1.30 to 3 A.M.	Music again and thoughts of the morrow.
3 to 4.30 A.M.	Attending to state affairs.
4.30 to 6 A.M.	Receiving Blessings of the Acharya, Purohita etc.

It would be interesting to note the following time-table prescribed by Sukracharya, another law-giver. He divided the day and night as follows :—

**DAY**

3 to 4.30 A.M.	Supervising accounts.
4.30 to 7.30 A.M.	Bath, prayers and physical exercises.
7.30 to 11.15 A.M.	Official business.
11.15 to 12.45 Noon	Dinner, rest and reading.
12.45 to 2.15 P.M.	Dealing justice and sitting in council.
2.15 to 3.45 P.M.	Out-door activities like hunting.
3.45 to 4.30 P.M.	Parade and army muster.
4.30 to 6 P.M.	Evening prayer and meals.
6 to 7.30 P.M.	Report of spies.
7.30 to 3 A.M.	Rest and sleep.

It is to be observed that provision of physical activities has been made in both of the time-tables and it goes without saying that a king was considered to have failed in his duty to his subjects if he did not keep himself in absolute physical fitness.

**Advice by a Law Giver**

The latter law giver Sukracharya has some valuable advice to give to ruling princes as regards health and physical activities. According to him a king "should every morning and evening exercise himself with elephants, horses, chariots and other conveyances. And he should learn as well as teach the military arrangements of soldiers."<sup>1</sup>

According to him a king "should sport with tigers, peacocks, birds and other animals of the forest and in the course of the hunting should kill the wild ones."<sup>2</sup>

"The advantages of hunting," he says, "are the growth of ability to strike the aim, fearlessness and agility in the use of arms and weapons ; but cruelty is the great defect."<sup>3</sup>

1. Sukranithi—By Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Ch. I, 663-64, p. 45.
2. Sukranithi—By Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Ch. I, 665-66, p. 45.
3. Sukranithi—By Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Ch. I, 667-69, p. 45.



He recommends a sleep for six hours a day. "He who sleeps for two YAMAS (*i.e.* six hours) enjoys much happiness."<sup>1</sup>

### Prosperity of Mauryan Times

Mauryan times witnessed great prosperity and wealth and consequently city-life was highly popular. Side by side with the exploits of the Mauryans on the battlefield, there existed a general tendency for ease and comfort among the richer classes of the populace. The extraordinary wealth and opulence of the time invited sloth and laziness and the decadence of the Aryan race, the beginning of which we witnessed even in the days of the epics continued to be a threat to the country till it assumed alarming proportions when the last of the able kings of the Mauryan dynasty, Asoka, laid down his sceptre.

### Urban Life

The glory of the urban life is eulogised by Vatsyayana in his Kamasutra. He gives us a vivid description of the city-dweller in Mauryan days. The leisured young men of the prosperous classes lived in palatial houses surrounded by beautiful gardens where fruits and flowers abounded. In the centre of the garden there was generally a pond and around it decorative seats and bowers. The young men swam in the pond, heard music and indulged in moon-light parties. They lived in elegant apartments, dressed themselves tastefully using elaborate toilet. Dicing and gambling were excessively popular in Mauryan times.

Kautilya like Yajnavalkya recommends the centralisation of gambling.<sup>1</sup> Betting and challenging are included in this

1. Sukranithi—By Benoy Kumar Sarkar, ch. I, 763, p. 53.

2. द्युतमेकमुखं कार्यं तस्करज्ञान कारणात् । एष एव विधिर्ज्ञेयः प्राणिद्युते

समाज्ञया ॥

(Arthasastra, Book III, Section 20)

(Gambling should be supervised by a referee who can be alert to all fouls that may take place. The same precaution should be taken against gambling where animals are involved).

category. There was an officer-in-charge who supplied dice for hire. Other receipts under this head were a share of 5% on what was won by each winner, fees for license and fees for supplying water and accommodation. In addition to the above, fines were levied upon false players, deceitful winners and the use of artifice in games.

Ball games were favoured by women and in the women's garden 'KANDUKA KRIDA' or playing at balls is often alluded to by Vatsyayana. Hunting was very popular and princes were supposed as a part of royal duty to hunt in order to keep down the ravages of wild animals, but hunting as a pastime too appears to have been popular.

### **Music and Dancing**

Music and dancing were practised extensively and the townsman portrayed by Vatsyayana was fond of music. He asks the townsman to handle his Veena with care. But the instructors of dancing were held under disrepute from the point of view of caste but we understand from the play of Kalidasa's *Malavikāgnimitra* that the teachers of dancing patronised by kings were men of consequence at court. *Bharatha Natyasastra*, undoubtedly of great antiquity, shows a long and systematic cultivation of the art of dancing and music. Its origin is traced from the days of Bharatha and is preserved today in its purest form in South India. Though the men who lived by the instruction of the art suffered a social stigma, the arts themselves were held in great esteem from remote times.

### **Food Habits**

As for the diet of the people, specially the leisured classes, we learn valuable information from Vatsyayana. Apart from such staple foods as rice, wheat, barley and milk, he speaks of meat as an important article of food. Taken as soup, roast and in other forms meat appears to have been a popular article of diet.



The Mahabharatha, it will be remembered, mentions the different kinds of animals the flesh of which were eaten. Buddhist literature also alludes frequently to the eating of animal food. Various kinds of wine, sweet (Madhu), dry (Asava) were in use. As a matter of fact drinking of liquors appears to have been popular, as Kautilya prescribes definite rules for the control of shops dealing in liquors.

### **Mauryan Law**

Greek writers are of opinion that the rule of Chandragupta the first of the Mauryas was severe and that drastic punishments were given even for small offences. It might have been true, for Chandragupta came to power by force and he had many enemies. But from a study of Arthashastra we understand that great discrimination was shown in the award of punishments. Women for instance were shown consideration. Pregnant women and those who had not passed a month after delivery were exempted from torturous punishments. The young, the aged, those suffering from hunger and thirst and those who were physically unfit were given special consideration. The above consideration as regards the award of punishments based on the physiological condition of the recipient is a unique Mauryan measure and it deserves our praise.

### **Kautilya's Conditions for a Good Army**

The Mauryan rule in India was based on military strength and both Chandragupta and his minister paid attention in the upkeep of an efficient army consisting of well-built, skilful and able-bodied soldiers. Kautilya emphasises the following points when he speaks of the efficiency of an army: "Hereditary, strong, disciplined, with a contented family, enduring even in tedious marches, invincible, highly trained in various modes of warfare, skilled in handling different kinds of weapons, ever ready to share the trouble or otherwise of the king, loyal and

composed, purely of Khsatriyas is the best army." It is obvious that the fighting men were recruited mainly from the Kshatriya class but exceptions were always there. Kautilya himself who was a Brahmin was an outstanding authority on military science and the chief adviser of Chandragupta in the affairs of the army.

### Justice in Warfare

In spite of the fact that the power of the Mauryans was based on military strength, we learn from foreign evidence that the Indians followed justice in their mode of warfare. Magasthenes for instance observes "whereas among other nations, it is usual in the contests of war, to ravage the soil and thus reduce it to an uncultivated waste, among the Indians on the contrary, husbandmen are regarded as a class that is sacred and inviolable, the tillers of the soil, even when battle is raging in their neighbourhood, are undisturbed by any sense of danger, for the combatants on either side in waging the conflict make carnage of each other, but allow those engaged in husbandry to remain quite unmolested. Besides they neither ravage an enemy's land with fire, nor cut down its trees."<sup>1</sup>

Mauryan days were good days for Physical Education in India and though the upper classes sought pleasure in the pursuit of luxurious amusements, the rule of the strong Mauryans kept in check the disintegrating forces and the solidarity of their rule did not break until Asoka laid down his illustrious crown.

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## **CHAPTER V**

### **PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PEOPLE IN SOUTH INDIA**

We read in the first chapter of this small volume that the south was in all probability the early home of man in India. The remote geographical position of South India and the stately Vindhya mountains surrounded by thick jungles, were barriers which prevented a free intercourse between the north and south. Politically we have clear details of South India only after the disintegration of the Mauryan empire. But the culture and civilisation of South India is very ancient and much older than the Aryan civilisation. Through the passage of several centuries it has preserved an individualistic and original culture of its own and is even today the repository of Hindu culture in its true form. It has maintained ancient Hindu traditions in art and literature and still has got temple craftsmen, artists and artisans who follow the ancient Dravidian system in their professions.

#### **Extensive Foreign Trade**

Several centuries before the birth of Christ, South India had extensive sea trade with western Asia and the far-east islands. Pearls, gold, ivory, pepper and live animals and birds like monkeys and peacocks were sent to Egypt, Greece and Babylon. Most of this merchandise was carried in Indian ships manned by South Indians. There are definite chronological data which help to establish the close intercourse between South India and Italy in the two centuries preceding the birth of Christ. Strabo mentions about an embassy received at Samos by emperor



Augustus from one of the Pandyan kings of South India. Extravagant prices were paid in Rome for South Indian commodities like pepper, silk, perfume, precious stones, cloth of gold and muslin for which the weavers of Southern India were reputed. Pliny, a Roman writer, lamented the great drain of Roman gold into India—nearly one million sterling yearly—and condemned the Roman extravagance. South India dominated the trade in Rome and its cloth-makers set the fashion among the nobility of Italy and the Roman ladies had a great partiality for South Indian muslin cloth.

### **General Neglect of South Indian History**

The importance of South India in the general history of our country is very great and it is indeed unfortunate that the story of the people who lived south of Vindhya occupies only a few pages in most of the books written both by European and Indian writers regarding the history of our country. The history of the Deccan has suffered long neglect and only in recent years scholars have begun to appreciate its contribution to the History of India as a whole. Vincent Smith, who is not himself exempt from this mistake, writes : "Early India history as a whole cannot be viewed in true perspective until the non-Aryan institutions of the South receive adequate treatment."

### **Play Traditions of the South**

From the point of view of the history of physical activities, the part played by South is highly important and it deserves separate treatment. As a matter of fact, the material available from the history of the south regarding the physical activities of the people who inhabited this part of the country, is comparatively more than in the case of North India. Further the people in South India in my opinion have preserved the play traditions of their ancestors in a purer form than their northern counterparts. South in the course of its long history has been

comparatively free from foreign invasions and has been left unmolested by the myriad of tribes which swept over the northern plains of India. Consequently the mode of public life and customs of the people in the South have not been much affected by the intrusion of foreigners. The British occupation of South India in later ages is of course an exception, but then it applied to the whole of India. We have repeatedly emphasised in this book that the play habits of a people are closely associated with the political, social, cultural, climatic, geographical and other essential features of national life and therefore it is no wonder that the South in its play habits preserves some individualistic and truly original features which are peculiarly her own. Several of the indigenous games played in South India like Silambam (stick-play), Jallikattu (bull fighting), Pandi (hopping on diagrams), Ammanai (juggling with shells or stones predominantly practised by women-folk in the rural parts of South India) and Pallanguzhi<sup>1</sup> were played enthusiastically by men and women of the south in the remote past.

### **Classification of Land**

According to the historians of South India the earliest profession known to man in the south was that of hunting and the earliest region inhabited by South Indian man was the Kurinji or the hilly country where he practised hunting. The ancient Tamilians named five regions fit for occupation by man and they named it as follows : (1) Kurinji, the hill-country ; (2) Palai (the dry region without water) ; (3) Mullai, the wooded land between the high lands and the low lands ; (4) Marudam, the lower courses of rivers ; and (5) Neydal or the coastal tract. As

1. An indoor game played by women on wooden boards with hollows using tamarind seeds or shells as coins. This game appears to have been taken to the far-east by South Indian emigrants ; for it has been current in Indo-China, Siam, Ceylon and other countries.



the south Indians spread from region to region he developed the stages of culture which each region was calculated to produce.

### Antiquity of Hunting

In the first region occupied by him *viz.*, Kurinji, the South Indian practised hunting and it was here he invented the bow and arrow. The early literature of the Tamilians is emphatic and unanimous on this point and it is significant from the point of view of the student of the history of physical education that the man in the south started his career as a marksman. Of course it is true that hunting has been the primary occupation of man in his early stages of development all over the world but the literary evidence and emphasis regarding it found in Tamil literature is unique. It establishes the high esteem in which physical activities were held in South India in ancient days.

### Games for Children

Abundant information is available in Tamil classics as regards the games and recreational pursuits practised by children in ancient days. For instance we find in the Kurundogai :

“Though children cannot enjoy the pleasure of riding in a car made by carpenter and dragged by small horses, they delight in dragging with their hands a toy-cart.”<sup>1</sup>

“The small sand-house built on the sandy plain by girls whose shadows resemble a double bamboo while they were bathing in the sea.”<sup>2</sup>

“Girls with bright bangles throw the pestle, made of black heart-wood with which they have bruised rice flat, on the paddy separated from stalks and play with clay.”<sup>3</sup>

1. KURUNDOGAI, 61, II, 1-3.

2. KURUNDOGAI, 326, II, 1-3.

3. KURUNDOGAI, 238, II, 1-3.

“With her unrivalled companions, she played in the water of the spring and her large, cool eyes became red on account of the play of the waves.”<sup>1</sup>

Swinging was another popular amusement—“She got on the hanging swing made of the black fibres of the palm well-twined and it was swayed to and fro by her play-mates who had flower-like eyes.”<sup>2</sup>

“Boys who have not gone to school draw under the spotted shade of the neem tree, rectangles with a pebble, like the assay-stone (of the goldsmith) and with the fruit of the Nelli (ALMA) as a ball, play the game called Pandil.”<sup>3</sup>

Girls with short bangles, spread the nuts of the KALANGU (Guilandina Bonduce) on the sanded floor in front of their houses to play with them.”<sup>4</sup>

A certain girls’ game frequently referred to is the ORAI. A doll is made of sedge-grass and decked with flowers and used in the play by a party of girls of the Mullai tract.<sup>5</sup>

### **A Merry and Sportive People**

The Tamils were a people given to merriment and they indulged in lot of sports and games. In the early stages of their history they were unaffected by Aryan religious ideas and they did not like the latter consider earthly existence an evil and try to exchange the joys of life in this world for a permanent bliss above. They were a happy people and even their religious ceremonies were accompanied by games and sports. Their religious rites—VILAVU - were accompanied by drinking, singing,

1. NATRINAI, 44, II, 1-2.
2. NATRINAI, 90, II, 6-7.
3. NATRINAI, 3, II, 2-4.
4. NATRINAI, 79, II, 2-3.
5. PURANANURU, 176, I, 1.



dancing and dumb-shows. Their secular amusements consisted of the following :

### Physical Activities

Chase (Vettai); wrestling (Marpor) ; sword-play ; single stick (Silambam); racing with chariots, elephants, bulls etc., playing with balls; playing with shells and gambling. A type of cricket (Kitti-pul) wherein the bat and ball were both represented by long and short sticks, was played by boys. The game is yet played with lot of enthusiasm by boys all over South India and hundreds of grown up men cherish the memory of their youthful days by the scars they have earned in this game. Another popular ancient sport is the *Kilari* or *Kelari* peculiar to Kerala.<sup>1</sup>

JALLIKATTU or bull-chasing is a form of animal contest confined to the Dravidian South and it survives even today in certain parts of the extreme south. Unlike the Spanish bull fighting wherein the odds are much against the animal, here the bull appears to have had the advantage. This sport enjoyed great popularity and from what we learn from Tamil classics, should have been a pretty dangerous thing for the competitors. The youths who entered the arena were absolutely unarmed and their purpose was to subdue the bull and not to kill it. The bulls too were not purposely irritated previous to the fight as it appears to be the case in the Spanish form of bull-fighting. As a matter of fact, the sport as obtained in the South was more a bull chasing than bull-fighting. The competitors embraced the bull and running along with him tried to bring him under control. The sport was looked on as an ordeal to test the manhood of young men since it is stated that the girls who watched the performance would choose their husbands from among the competitors.

1. Shri Sridharan Nair of the Y.M.C.A. College, Madras has published an interesting pamphlet on this unique sport of Kerala.

Fishing was a popular mode of sports and the following is a description of angling: "The expert angler of the 'PANAR' tribe carries on his shoulders a leather bag full of bits of meat and fixes them at the end of strings tied to long bamboo sticks. The fish bites the meat hanging at the bent end of the fishing rod and shakes the string and thus are caught."<sup>1</sup>

Capturing game by means of nets was another favourite amusement: "Hard-eyed hunters fix closely woven nets on the thorns of the hedges of fields in PALAI land and drive into them rabbits which have long ears like the outer petals of the thorny stalked lotus. They proceed then with dogs whose jaws are wide-open, beat the shrubs and hunt the rabbits and eat them."<sup>2</sup>

Wrestling was a favourite form of sports among the ancient Tamils and the following is a description of 'MARPOR' (wrestling): "In AMUR which produces sweet and strong liquor, he overcame the great strength of the wrestler. He bent one of his knees and planted it on his adversary's chest. With the other leg he defeated the tactics of the enemy. He bent the back of his rival as an elephant that tries to eat a bamboo and hammered his rival's head and feet and conquered him. May Tittan, the heroic father of the wrestler, see the sight whether it would please him or not."<sup>3</sup>

### Food Habits

The people of the south had no objection to meat and as a matter of fact they enjoyed it. Nevertheless meat was not the staple food of the people and it was taken in the form of curry, just as it is the practice today in India. We in India take meat, vegetables, fruits etc., to supplement the grains which form the main part of our diet. Meat and vegetables spiced and mixed

1. PERUM BANARRUPPADAI, 283-287.
2. PERUM BANARRUPPADAI, 111-117.
3. PURANANURU, 80.



with rice make a popular dish all over India and is called 'BRIYANI'; Whereas for an average European, meat is the staple food and he takes grains and vegetables to subsidise his main food. The ancient people of the South in addition to meat took fish and birds. The chief cereal was paddy and it was grown in abundance. Paddy was often boiled and then it was known as 'PULUNGALARISI'. Honey, jaggery, milk and milk products, barley, beans, sesamum, fruits and vegetables occupied an important place in the diet of the people. The use of salt was known. As we noted earlier the people had no objection to liquor. The diet of the people was comprehensive, well-balanced and nutritive.

### **Mode of Warfare**

War occupies an important place in ancient poetry, and it was idolised by the people. The wars of the people who lived in the south were not inspired by love of territories. They loved war for the sake of sports and more as means for the exhibition of their valour and strength than for mere acquisition of land and property. The fact that the territories of the Cheras, Solas and Pandians—the three important kingdoms of the south—remained intact for centuries is an evidence which cannot be ignored. The ancient Tamilian kings indulged in war for the development of martial virtues for attaining glory and as a form of sports. Wars as a rule were waged after the harvest season when the land remained uncultivated. The word KALAM in Tamil meaning 'waste-land' also denotes war, which again goes to prove that war was waged on uncultivated soil without involving the damage of crops.

The wealth of words in the Tamil language meaning war (there are dozens of them) indicate that it was a favourite form of sports with the ancient people of the south. We know it was in the form of sports because the object of ancient war like that of wrestling 'MARPOR' which was thus a variety of 'POR'

was not for satisfying the lust for bloodshed but for proving strength and skill. Fighting was almost an annual institution undertaken in the season between the gathering of the harvest and the starting of the cultivation for the next year. The importance given to war can be gathered from the fact that a king who died in bed was considered to have died ignobly. His head was therefore cut with a sword and then he was buried. Only then he was considered fit to reach heaven.

### **Ethics of Warfare**

The ancient warfare was governed by justice and a strict code of ethics. Fighting was between men of equal strength and equal arms. Fleeing from the scene of action was considered to be the most ignominious act of a soldier. We hear of the familiar account of a Tamilian mother who when she heard of the reported flight of her son from the battlefield, swore she would slice her breast that nurtured her son if the account was true. Later when she saw her son lying dead with an arrow on his chest, she wept with joy for having bred a boy who fulfilled his duties as a true soldier.

### **Love of Nature**

The people of the south were possessed by a keen love for nature and its beauties. Even while fighting, they wore garlands made of sweet-smelling flowers. The five tracts occupied by the South Indian man early in history carry the names of flowers and what better tribute could be paid by man to nature?

The weapons used by the people of the south were the lance, sword, trident, axe, bow and arrow, shield, armour, gauntlets etc. Their armies were accompanied by music and various kinds of drums were employed.

### **Tamilian Kings Admirers of Fine Physique**

As we mentioned earlier they carried on a flourishing



trade with the outside world specially Europe and a great quantity of Roman coins unearthed in South India bear testimony to the extent of the trade. YAVANA or Greek merchants thronged the bazaars of the Dravidian sea-ports and royal capitals to purchase pepper, precious stones and fine silks and cotton fabrics. Dravidian kings of old who were lovers of sports and fine physique, admired the stalwart YAVANA soldiers or Asiatic Greeks, who may have come from the Grecco-Baktrian kingdom or by way of sea and retained several of them in their service as body guards.

From the account available from South Indian classics we can safely conclude that both the rulers and the people were highly sports-minded and knew the value of health and physical activities.

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## CHAPTER VI

### POST-MAURYAN ERA

The great empire of the Mauryas declined after the death of Asoka and fell within half a century of his glorious rule. This dramatic collapse of a great power after a rule of nearly a century has tempted scholars to speculate on the reasons for such a downfall. There is a wide divergence of opinion among scholars as to the causes that led to the abrupt end of this vast empire the achievements of which have never been surpassed by any subsequent dynasty save perhaps the rule of the British in later times. Out of the several causes that are attributed to the fall of the Mauryan Empire, one deserves close examination from the point of view of students of Physical Education. According to the view of one school of writers, the doctrine of 'Ahimsa' or non-violence adopted by Asoka as a policy of state was the root cause of the decay of the Mauryan Empire. They hold that the martial ardour of imperial Magadha was bound to vanish when Asoka gave up the aggressive militarism of his forefathers and disbanded his army. As it is well-known, the great emperor gave up warfare and enjoined upon his sons and grandsons to follow his example.

#### **Non-violence not the Reason for the Decline of Mauryan Power**

Though the above theory appears to be quite valid, the extinction of the empire cannot be traced to the above cause alone. The Mauryans held sway over a large part of the country for about a century and their policy was good enough to keep in check the forces of disintegration. There have been empires in the history of world which pursued a livelier and more

aggressive policy and yet have not outlived the tenure of the Mauryan power. Lasting contributions to the culture and civilisation of the world have more often been made by dynasties which placed their trust on justice and non-violence rather than those that ruled by a policy of blood and iron. The great republic of Athens and the long and glorious rule of Akbar are apt illustrations. For all its power and influence, the neighbouring state of Sparta, the sister-city of Athens, has not left a similar claim on the gratitude of posterity. And again Aurangzeb, a kinsman of Akbar, who had as great powers as the latter, fails to equal or even near the achievements of Akbar. History is never tired of reminding us of the bankruptcy of force.

To ascribe therefore the downfall of the Mauryan power to the policy of Ahimsa pursued by Asoka is not wholly correct. Several other causes like the difficulty of communication with distant provinces, the oppressive rule and rebellious conduct of the provincial governors, internal quarrels, palace intrigues and official treachery can be attributed to the same.

The last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty was killed by one Pushyamitra and he established the Sunga dynasty.

### **Performance of Asvamedha by Pushyamitra**

The ascent to the throne by Pushyamitra marks the revival of Brahmin influence and the performance of Asvamedha by Pushyamitra is significant from our point of view. Soon after his coming to power the Sunga king had trouble from the '*Yavanas*' or Greeks who occupied Punjab and the north-west of India and Pushyamitra who won his battle against the foreigners celebrated the event by performing the famous horse-sacrifice, a popular Aryan rite about which mention was made earlier in this book. This ceremony of the Sunga king was long remembered in northern India and the traditions were embodied in Kalidasa's famous play MALAVIKAGNIMITRA written about the fifth century A.D. It is interesting to note that the



hero of the play Agnimitra was the crown prince and son of Pushyamitra.

### **Ceremony of Asvamedha**

Asvamedha which is an elaborate Vedic rite was very popular in the epic times. This could be performed by kings alone for the welfare of the state and as a symbol for universal dominion.

The ceremony of Asvamedha purged of its religious contents and mysticism represents in essence the strength and physical prowess of the performer and his associates. A king before he professed his claims as the ruler of many peoples and different domains was expected to prove his strength by an exhibition of his valour and martial qualities. Such an exhibition of strength was necessary on the part of the monarch to win the confidence of his subjects.

### **Doctrine of Yoga**

Pushyamitra was a virile and energetic king and he ruled for about 36 years (187-151 B.C.). Patanjali, the great Sanskrit Grammarian and the author of the YOGA-SUTRA, was in all probability a contemporary of the Sunga king and witnessed the performance of his celebrated horse-sacrifice; for he mentions about the horse-sacrifice in his grammar when by a sentence he illustrates the use of tenses. YOGA<sup>1</sup> is one of the fundamental doctrines of Indo-Aryan faith accepted by all religious sects. It is essentially a study devoted to the means of attaining perfect health and mental poise. But as it is inevitably the case with all our ancient literature it is surrounded by mystic and religious complexities. In its original form the science of Yoga is older than Patanjali and it appears to have existed right from the Vedic times. In the words of E.B.

1. The word *Yoga* is derived from the root, *Yuj*, to bind together. *Yoga* means binding one's psychic powers, balancing and enhancing them. The Bhagavadgita—Radhakrishnan, P. 50

Havell, "Yoga in its literal sense of union was a system of religious meditation which connoted the Vedic doctrine of the supreme soul, for it was by means of Yoga that the soul of man (atman) attained to blissful, ecstatic communion with the universal spirit (Paramatman) and by Patanjali the word was used in the strict sense of communion with God."<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of Yoga is peculiarly Indian and its study has profoundly influenced Indian thought and philosophy from time immemorial. It is certain that the science in due course made its way to the West and specially to Greece, for from the dialogue of Socrates and the works of Plato, we can discern that the great philosophers were not unaware of its existence. Even today the study of Yoga offers its irresistible charm to thousands of men in the West who are its enthusiastic adherents.

Devoid of its mystic concepts the study of Yoga is an excellent treatment of Physical Education in its noblest and purest form. Centuries before western thought could fathom the real perception of education, the Indo-Aryans had given a real meaning to the purpose of education and as a matter of fact to the very purpose of human existence. Yoga represents a unique harmony of the physical, mental and spiritual faculties of man. Man could hold communion with God only with the co-operative function of the above faculties in a background of utmost personal purity and devotion to the living creatures of the earth. In short he should follow the path of 'Dharma'.

A set of physical exercises were prescribed for the '*Yogin*' (Performer of Yoga) which he was expected to undergo in a state of mental relaxation and poise. The exercises were calculated to lead to spiritual contentment and bliss. Examined critically, the above conditions attached to the practice of Yoga are not abnormal and they do not as commonly supposed make

1. Aryan Rule in India—E.B. Havell, p. 134.



an exorbitant demand upon human powers. Fundamentally, it is a simple and sane study the object of which sportsmen all over the world try to achieve even today. It is known to all students of Physical Education that physical exercises performed in a state of nervous excitement and strain are not conducive to the well-being of men and women. We are equally aware of the necessity of personal cleanliness and the importance of keeping the places wherein we exercise free from all forms of dirt. First class coaches in athletics are never tired of instilling a sense of confidence and mental repose among the men who are in their charge. We know how ruinous it would be for the prospects of an athlete winning a 100 meters event—however accomplished let him be—if he is in a state of excitement and nervous tension; or to say if no balance exists between his mind and body. As for the spiritual contents of Yoga, it only corresponds with modern educational theory wherein it is repeatedly asserted that education is a harmonious development of body, mind and soul. However the doctrine of Yoga clearly steals a march over western thought when it brings in the quality of '*Dharma*' or piety. This we have discussed in an earlier section of this book.

### **Quality of Dharma**

Even as regards the quality of '*Dharma*' as associated with human conduct and applicable particularly to education, modern thought is slowly swerving towards East. Eminent writers on Physical Education specially emphasise the need of 'purposeful enjoyment'; or in other words they advocate a distinctive philosophy of exercise calculated to give direction and meaning to bodily exercise. The world is slowly awakening to the wisdom and depth of our ancestors and Indian philosophy is gradually unfolding its charm and significance to thinking men all over the world who have seen the deep scars inflicted by recent wars and are rapidly arriving to a con-

viction as regards the bankruptcy of force in the settlement of human problems.

It can hardly therefore be exaggerated that Yoga is an outstanding contribution made by India to the cause of Physical Education. And the credit of giving a superb and complete definition to education, which has never been surpassed or even equalled by any school of modern thought solely belongs to early Indians.

### **Contribution of Sunga Kings**

Pushyamitra Sunga was followed to the throne by his son Agnimitra and the Sunga dynasty which altogether consisted of ten kings ruled for a period of 112 years from 187 to 75 B.C. Though we know very little of the history of their rule, the Sungas played an important part in our history. They stemmed the tide of foreign invasions and maintained the integrity of the Magadhan empire. They held friendly relations with the Greeks who had occupied Punjab and promoted art and literature. They were responsible for the fine gateway railings which surround the SANCHI STUPAS built by the great emperor Asoka. Yet another contribution made by the Sungas is the impetus they gave to Physical Culture and activities. The Sungas who had a busy time in resisting foreign invasions and waging wars against neighbouring states like Kalinga and Andhra, naturally found the pacific policy of the Buddhist Mauryans not to their advantage.

### **Change in Philosophy**

India which was a land of VIHARAS (monasteries) during the days of the later Mauryas was gradually turning to arms. Martial displays and exhibitions of valour soon followed and the performance of '*Asvamedhas*' is an evidence of the change that was taking place. Buddhist traditions were opposed to the ritualistic practices of Vedic Hinduism and hence during the long reign of Asoka, there was a discontinuance of '*Asvamedha*'



and other like ceremonies. With the exit of the Mauryans who were champions of Buddhism, the essentially Aryan rites and rituals were slowly coming to their own. The obvious discredit which followed the pursuit of arms and physical activities in Buddhist times gradually began to disappear and the original valour and martial practices of the Vedic Aryans started slowly to assert themselves. But it is not to be supposed that the influence of Buddhism was lost among the people. It remained a force for a long time and it did great service to Hinduism by cleansing it of some of the undesirable elements that existed in it before the advent of the Buddha. The Buddhists regained a large measure of their political influence later when Kanishka came to power.

After the fall of the Sungas, Magadha was for about half a century in the hands of a new dynasty called the Kanvas. The history of Magadha, from the end of the Kanva rule to the rise of the Guptas, three hundred years later, is obscure although according to the Puranas, the Andhras succeeded to the throne of Magadha after the Kanvas.

### **Greek Influence**

As we mentioned before, the Greeks had occupied Punjab during the reign of the Sungas. Except for one ruler by the name of Menander, the individual Greek rulers have left no definite mark on the history of India. Menander, known in Buddhist literature as Milinda, is claimed by them as their adherent and there is a famous text known as the "Questions of Milinda."

There can be little doubt that Greek art and learning exerted considerable influence on India from this age. We find the influence of Greek inscriptions stamped on Hindu coins and Greek astronomers referred to by Indian astronomers. For instance GARGA, an ancient Indian astronomer writes: "The Yavanas (Bactrian Greeks) are outer barbarians, but amongst them this science (astronomy) is well established." But in the branches of

medicine and surgery Greeks have borrowed from Indians. "Modern researches prove that the *Materia Medica* of the Greeks, even of Hippocrates the 'Father of Medicine', is based on the older *Materia Medica* of the Hindus."<sup>1</sup> The earliest Arabian writers of medicine refer Charaka the famous Hindu physician by name.

This Charaka in several places of his treatise has emphasised the need of graduated physical exercise for restoring the health of patients. He defines '*Vyayam*' (physical exercise) as the performance of such exercises as would give courage to the mind and strength and steadiness to the muscle. These exercises are to be done cautiously, according to the measure of one's strength.

*Vyayam* or physical exercise is defined by Susruta, another ancient authority on Indian medicine, as follows: "Any act that causes fatigue to the body is *Vyayam*."<sup>2</sup> Commentators of Susruta give the following definition: "Swinging heavy weights called *Santolas* (each weighing 10 or 20 pounds), *Gunakarsha* (pulling bowstrings), *Dhanurakarsha* (bending bows) and bending of the body in various directions by regular physical exercise is called *Vyayam*. '*Charya*' is defined as the practice of exercises, involving the use of swords and arrows while riding on elephants, horses and chariots or in making quick marches on foot.

Susruta's definition of '*Vyayam*' appears to be most simple, as he says that it is enough if the individual gets tired by any actions or movements of his body resulting in vigorous circulation of his blood and quick respiration. If one is compelled to open

1. Dr. Wise's Review of the History of Medicine as cited by R. C. Dutt in "The Civilisation of India" (Temple Primers Series), p. 64.

2. शरीरायासजननं कर्मव्यायामसंज्ञितम् ।।

Susruta Samhita, Chapter 24, Slokam 38.



his mouth while doing any exercise, then is the time for him to consider that one half of his strength is exhausted.<sup>1</sup>

### Popularity of Gymnastics

That Gymnastics was popular in India is strengthened by the following account given in Buddhist canonical texts. Giving the story of the medical practice of JIVAKA, a reputed physician and surgeon, they add: "His third important case and call came from Banaras, where a merchant's son had a strangulation of the intestines, caused by a gymnastic feat. It was a surgical case. He cut through the skin of the belly, drew the twisted intestines out and showed them to his wife and then, disentangling the twisted intestines, he put them back into their right position, stitched the skin together, and anointed the wound with a salve."<sup>2</sup>

### Kushans

The kingdom of the Bactrian Greeks came to an end in 126 B. C. when the Yu-Chis and other Turanian tribes swept through Central Asia. Havishka of this Yu-Chi tribe ruled in Kabul and conquered Kashmir. One of his successors, the renowned Kanishka, extended the power of the dynasty in the first century after Christ.

Unfortunately we know very little of the rule of the Kushans and most of what we know is only from traditions. A headless statue of Kanishka has been unearthed near Mathura and he appears in a Turkish dress, a short tunic open in front, a high hat, boots and arms. Kanishka and his followers adapted them-

1. हृदिस्थानस्थितोवायुः यदावक्त्रं प्रपद्यते ।

व्यायामं कुर्वतो जंतोः तद्वलार्थस्य लक्षणम् ॥

Susruta Samhita, Ch. 24, slokams 47 and 48.

2. As cited in the "History and Culture of the Indian People—The Age of Imperial Unity", p. 588.

selves quickly to Indian conditions and civilisation. The advent of the Kushans must certainly have introduced new manners and customs into India. The civilisation of India is remarkable for its powers of assimilation. The system of Physical Culture and activities in India should have received new elements from these Turanian and Yu-Chi tribes. We have noted already the influence exerted by Greece in the art, literature and sculpture of this country and the contribution of these virile tribes should necessarily have injected new methods and ideas in the sphere of physical activities. The paucity of literature makes the task of identifying them practically impossible.

Kanishka is said to have been a great patron of learning. The three great philosophers, Asvaghosha, Parsva and Vasumitra enjoyed his favour. Charaka the reputed physician and Nagarjuna the famous Buddhist monk are said to have been at his court. Under his patronage, Taksha-Sila once again became an important seat of learning and attracted students from the Far East who helped to spread the faith of Buddhism in China, Tibet and other countries of the East. The causes for the collapse of Kushan power are not known.

### **Shah Kings of Gujerat**

Another important dynasty that ruled parts of north India before the coming of the Guptas was that of the Shah kings. These kings are known as the Shah kings of Gujerat and have left us inscriptions of great historical value. We find from these inscriptions that Hinduism and Buddhism flourished side by side under their rule. Rudra Daman was one of the important rulers of this dynasty and he has left an inscription in which he speaks of a bridge which he repaired.

We shall now briefly set forth to examine the system of education, social conditions and food habits of the people in the Post-Mauryan period of our history *i. e.*, before the emergence of Guptas as a great power.



## SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

The form of education as in Vedic days was predominantly based on 'Sruti' or gift of hearing and subjects for study for the most part remained the same. We learn from the MANU-SMRITI that the subjects for study comprised besides the entire Vedic literature, Dharma-Sastras or Smritis, Itihasa and Purana, Economics and allied subjects, Dialectics and Politics.

### Education of Princes

As for the princes, they had in addition to the above, received military training relating to the operation of the different elements of the army such as elephants, horses, chariots and weapons of war. He had also to study AKHYAYIKA (tales), UDAHARANA (illustrative stories), Dharmasastras and Arthasastra.

Other subjects that were studied with interest were lexicography, prosody, phonology, verses, grammar, etymology, astronomy, astrology and the six Vedangas.

King Menander is said to have had knowledge of 19 arts and sciences viz., Sruti (Vedas) and Smriti; Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaiseshika systems of philosophy, arithmetic; magic; causation; spells; the art of war, poetry and currency.

### Brahminic and Buddhist Learning

Education was in the hands of Brahmins and Buddhist monks. In the Sungha-Kanva period, Brahmin influence was in the ascendancy and therefore it is quite likely that Brahminical seats of learning grew in importance. While the duties of the teachers and pupils follow the same lines in Buddhist and Brahminical systems, the main difference between them lies in the character of their educational institutions. The Brahminic system of education was based upon 'GURUKULA' pattern. Their schools had only a handful of students who lived along with their

teachers in their families. The students attended to the needs of their Guru and devoted their leisure to the pursuit of knowledge; whereas in the Buddhist method of education the students received instruction in the 'Vihara' or monastery somewhat resembling modern schools and colleges. The strength of a Buddhist school was often 500. Students had opportunities for collective living and came under a spirit of brotherhood and democracy.

### **Nature of Buddhist Form of Education**

Buddhist monasteries unlike the '*Gurukulas*' of the Brahmins were built on a vast scale occupying large tracts of land. They were self-contained and grew the food necessary for them on lands donated to them. They maintained cattle and practised dairy-farming. Naturally such big institutions necessitated planning and organisation. The staff and students had to toil hard in raising up the crops and attending to their necessities without outside help. Gardening was extensively practised and the above features of monastic life in addition to encouraging community life among the inmates provided them ample opportunities for outdoor life and vigorous physical exercises. The students were housed in different hostels according to the nature of their studies. What, however, was absent from the monastery was the domestic touch of the Brahminical system of education.

We learn from Buddhist writings that there was no discrimination between one caste and the other and studies were chosen freely and not according to the caste of the student. Several Brahmin students were learning physical culture, archery and military training. There is an interesting story of a Brahmin boy named JOTIPALA, a native of Banaras, whose king sent him at his expense to Taksha-Sila for education in archery. When he finished his education and was returning home, his teacher presented him with his own sword, a bow and arrow, a



coat of mail and a diamond and asked him to take his place as the head of a school of 500 pupils to be trained up by him, as he was himself old and about to retire.<sup>1</sup> Taksha-Sila had institutes of higher education in archery and physical culture and hundreds of princes and students even from far off countries came there for studies.

Another notable feature of the Buddhist method of education was the equality of status enjoyed by the students irrespective of their birth and social standing. Princes of royal blood shared a common, simple, democratic life of equality with their poorer comrades. The food served was very simple consisting of cooked grains like wheat and rice, molasses, curd and milk. For the purpose of waking the boys from their beds early in the morning, the schools kept cocks to serve as a clock or alarm bell!

In addition to the public schools, institutions existed that catered to the needs of particular communities like the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Banaras was another famous seat of learning that attracted a large number of students. It was noted for its school of music which enjoyed countrywide reputation.

### SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND THE FOOD HABITS OF THE PEOPLE

Compared with the social life of the Vedic, Epic and Mauryan periods, the life of the people in this period was richer and more varied in content. In spite of the general note of pessimism present in the religious literature pertaining to this period, causing a strong tendency towards asceticism, common people had a liking for the enjoyment of the good things of life. Life revealed by the sculptures pertaining to this period shows the lighter side of life with its bustle and activity and

1. Cited from Jataka tales in "The History and Culture of Indian People—Age of Imperial Unity", p. 594.

marked by a sense of humour. Literature also reflects the vivacious side of life. Apart from singing, dancing, music and dramatic performances, entertainments were provided by buffoons, mimic players, rope dancers, jugglers and wandering bards or heralds. Gardening and the art of making garlands by various combinations of flowers provided amusement to many. Various kinds of games both indoor and outdoor are mentioned. The former includes dice, trap-ball, guessing other people's thoughts<sup>1</sup> etc. Among the latter may be noted hunting, chariot races, archery matches, wrestling, boxing, shooting marbles with fingers and ploughing with mimic ploughs.<sup>2</sup> In addition there were several festivals and people took part in them in a happy and jovial spirit.

### **Festivals of the Hindus**

Hindū festivals from time immemorial have been a source of amusement and exercise for millions of people in this country. Their gaiety, colour and vivacity have never been surpassed by any nation on earth. Mountstuart Elphinstone, the celebrated British historian of India, writing centuries later remarks: "These (festivals) have a strong resemblance to fairs in England and exhibit the same whirling machines and the same amusements and occupations. But no assemblage in England can give a notion of the lively effect produced by the prodigious concourse of people in white dresses and bright-coloured scarfs and turbans. . . . The Hindus enter into the amusements of these meetings with infinite relish and show every sign of peaceful activity and enjoyment. They may, on all these occasions, have some religious ceremony to go through but it does not take

1. This game is distinctly Buddhist in its origin.

2. This activity also appears to be of Buddhist origin. This kind of competition with mimic ploughs should have ideally suited the students of the monastries who had to plough lands surrounding the 'Viharas' or monastries.



up a moment and seldom occupies a thought. At the pilgrimages, indeed, the long anticipation of worship to be performed, the example of other pilgrims invoking the God aloud, and the sanctity of the place, concur to produce stronger feelings of devotion. There are also more ceremonies to be gone through, and sometimes these are joined in by the whole assembly, when the thousands of eyes directed to one point and voices shouting one name, is often impressive even to the least interested spectator.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Significance of Pilgrimage**

The observations of the English historian were made after a lapse of centuries but the festivals and pilgrimages of the Hindus remain practically unchanged and the same spirit of ardour and energy characterises the festivals and pilgrimages of today. Thousands of Indians, both men and women, travel hundreds of miles all over the country, an appreciable number of them on foot in all sorts of weather braving dangers and difficulties with the same enthusiasm and spirit which motivated the movement of their forefathers. Rural folks in thousands cover long distance with their families for the purpose of visiting centres of pilgrimage and festivals. Centres of pilgrimage and festivals are scattered all over the country and attract visitors in millions.

Our places of pilgrimage are in most cases excellent health resorts. Their elevation, there natural scenery, the pure water from perennial springs and waterfalls for drinking and bathing, make them best fitted as health resorts. In some places, one has to walk a long way up the hill in approaching the sacred shrines and this in itself provides a cure for many a malady of the mind and body. Pilgrimage provides limitless opportunities for amusement and recreation and the long walking and travel

which thousands of pilgrims have to undergo provide bodily exercise and excellent education to the people. With more planning and organisation we can exploit this tremendous enthusiasm of the people and turn the centres of pilgrimage and festivals into healthy resorts and provide further opportunities for recreation, relaxation and amusement. A lot remains to be done by way of averting casualties in the form of stampedes and epidemics.

There is a popular contention, though erroneous, in some quarters that Hindu religion as a whole has never given much attention to the matter of health and physical activities. We have had occasion to point out the mistake of this notion earlier in this book, but the instance of the Hindu festivals and pilgrimages is a point worthy of emphasis. Hindu festivals and pilgrimages are almost ageless and are frequently mentioned in our epics. Our forefathers could not have meant them merely for the purpose of satisfying religious curiosity and zeal. Orthodox people yet believe that pilgrimages undertaken by rail or motor cars are not truly efficacious. They prefer to travel by foot. The idea that a pilgrimage ought to provide bodily exercise for the participant is yet alive in our country. To quote an illustrious historian of our country : "Another thing, which is equally noticeable is that the culture of all branches of learning connected itself with religion and religious rites in ancient India. Religion inspired observations, stimulated enquiries, led to the discovery of rules, encouraged the compilation of laws, extended the triumphs of science in India. So close is this connection that ancient sages in India believed they were upholding and spreading their ancient faith and rites when they were adding to their stores of knowledge; and modern scholars are unable to decide where religious speculations end and science and philosophy begin."<sup>1</sup>

1. Civilisation of India, by R.C. Dutt, p. 32.



## Service of Religion

The above claims of our religion might appear superfluous and particularly for such of us who are educated on English traditions and sedulously taught to undervalue our religious heritage, Hindu religion has often been represented as the weed that choked the stream of reason and blocked the path of progress. In defence of his claim, the above historian writes : "The observation of stars for fixing the time of sacrifice led to the study of astronomy, and a treatise was attached to each Veda fixing the sacred calendar. The construction of altars of specified shapes and areas led to the study of Geometry in India long before that science was known in Greece. For the construction of proper altars, squares had to be found equal to two or more given squares, or equal to the difference between two given squares; oblongs had to be turned to squares, and squares into oblongs; triangles had to be constructed equal to given squares and oblongs; and circles had to be found approximately equal to given squares. The rules for these and various other problems are found in the codes of threefold law spoken above."<sup>1</sup>

## Health and Religion

Hindu religious practices are in essence healthful to men and women. The difficulty experienced by the common folk in understanding the terse Sanskrit aphorisms containing hygienic principles had led to the happy blending of religion and customs conducive to physical well-being, as the beginnings of hygiene are traceable to Vedic texts. The scouring of teeth and the scrapping of the tongue with morgosa or acacia tooth-sticks, a fresh one every morning, cleans the mouth. The use of these tooth-sticks is more wholesome than that of a tooth brush which is impossible to keep clean as their bristles sooner or later get

1. Civilisation of India, by R.C. Dutt, p. 31.

sodden and impregnated with disease germs. Fasting, which is another Hindu religious practice, is the key to renewed youth and longevity, is practised as a religious observance on Ekadasi, Eclipse and other important holy days and serves to prevent and cure disease. "Keep your mouth shut and bowels open" is an early Hindu maxim.

Morning ablutions followed by Suryanamaskar serve to clean the body, promote absorption of energy from the sun's rays and build resistance. Archakas and worshippers are enjoined to bathe and don clean clothes before entering the sanctum of a temple. The lime-washing of houses on festive occasions and the daily scrubbing of floors and scouring of culinary utensils promote domestic cleanliness. The bon-fires made on BOGIE festival day have been devised to destroy by fire all old, useless, dirty and germ-infested articles before going in for a new stock. The circling of temples and prostration before gods increase hardihood and muscular endurance. The offering of sacred water in temples from germ-free copper vessels with sprigs of antiseptic 'tulasi' plant disinfect the mouth and throat of worshippers. The burning of camphor and incense purifies the atmosphere. Sea baths indulged on holy days tone up the system by providing valuable means of exercise.

### **Status of Women**

As regards the position of women during the period under survey, it was not much enviable. There was a growing tendency to lower the age of marriage and child marriages were becoming frequent. The ceremony of 'UPANAYANAM' (thread-marriage) which was in early times common to both boys and girls was being restricted to boys. This 'spiritual disfranchisement' of women indicates the debasement of their social status. But the lot of women appears to have been better in the period of Buddhist influence. A large number of women who



turned as nuns were well educated and their literary efforts are yet preserved in Buddhist works.

## **Clothing**

Regarding dress, people in addition to cotton used clothes made of silk, linen and wool. Nearchus describes thus the usual dress of the Indian : They used two garments of cotton "an under-garment which reaches below the knee half-way down to the ankles, and an upper garment which they throw partly over their shoulders and partly twist in folds round their head."<sup>1</sup>

Stitched clothes appear to have come into fashion. This is indicated by the complete outfit for sewing described in contemporary Buddhist literature. Men and women used foot-wear and several kinds of shoes are described. They were made of leather, wood, wool and the leaves of palmyra and date-palm. Several kinds of furniture were in use and the rich people used highly carved and artistic varieties of furniture.

## **Food Habits**

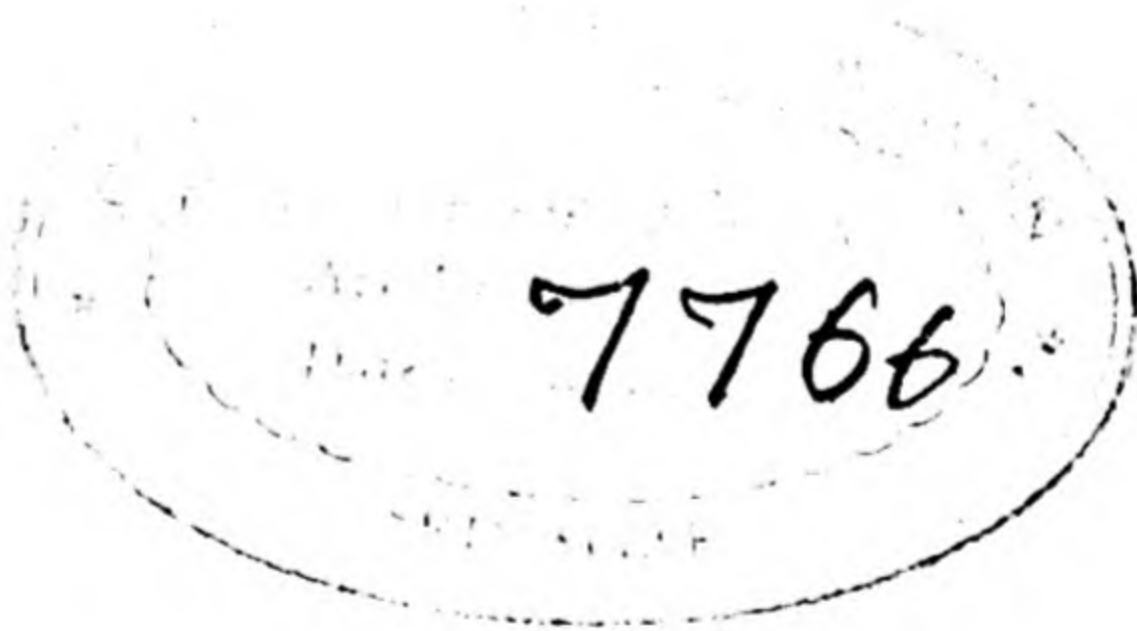
Regarding food habits, people used rice, barley and wheat as the chief foodgrains. Rich people and the Kshatriyas ate rice mixed with flesh. In spite of the growing tendency of 'Ahimsa' (non-injury to living beings) encouraged by the Buddhists and Jains, various kinds of meat and fish including beef were used by the people. Drinks consisted of grape juice, honey, syrups made from various fruits and edible roots. Drinks were also made from various kinds of herbs and flowers.

The next phase of our survey of the history of the Physical Education of our people is the period of the Guptas.

1. McCrindle, Megasthenes, p. 219.

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## **CHAPTER VII**

### **GOLDEN AGE OF THE GUPTAS**

We know little of events in North India after the decline of the Kushans and we gain the thread of history only when Chandragupta, the first of the Gupta dynasty, crowned himself as king in A.D. 320.

The Gupta period, which began in A.D. 320 and inaugurated what is popularly known as India's Golden Age from 330 to 455 A.D. was an era of imperialism and autocracy, in spite of which the Government was good and popular. The Gupta monarchs could be called like the Tudors in England as 'benevolent despots'. That the people were happy under the rule of the Guptas is testified by the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien who toured India during their reign.

#### **Was the Era of the Guptas Reactionary ?**

The era of the Guptas is often described as the beginning of Hindu reaction headed by the Brahmins. Though it is true that the period of the Guptas marks the revival of Brahminic traditions and practices, there is no evidence to prove that the movement was reactionary in character. As a matter of fact Buddhism appears to have lost its influence due to its own failure to meet the needs of the time. When it adopted the Hindu ritualistic practices and idol worship, it lost its individualism and got itself slowly submerged into the ocean of Hinduism.

#### **Causes for the Decline of Buddhism**

The most potent cause for the decline of Buddhism was not its ritualistic rivalry with Hinduism or the withdrawal of the

royal support extended to it by great emperors like Asoka and Kanishka as commonly supposed. It was mainly due to the spirit of the times. The martial ardour of the turbulent Aryan clans had long suffered a check in the hands of the foreign invaders like the Greeks, Scythians and Kushans and they only wanted a leader to set a spark to their feeling of nationalism and spirit of patriotism. The able and powerful Guptas supplied them the leadership they needed and therefore they "rejected Buddhism as a system unfit for their society tending to make people weak and passive."<sup>1</sup>

### **Fighting qualities of the People Weakened**

The Gupta monarchs were virile and adventurous and they were quick to perceive that the fighting strength of the country was becoming dangerously weakened and the resources of the state needed for the preservation of national integrity were absorbed by the thousands of monastries filled with the wearers of the yellow robe. The Gupta emperors were devout Hindus and they cherished the ideals of their Aryan forefathers. During their reign Pali, the language of Buddhist India, was superseded and Sanskrit became the official language of the state. The Gupta emperors made a new language and in fact a new nation.

### **All-round Abilities of Samudragupta**

Chandragupta, the first king of the Gupta dynasty, was succeeded by his son Samudragupta, whose ambition was to become master of Hindustan. He performed the sacred Aryan rite Asvamedha which had last been heard of in Pushyamitra's time. He celebrated it with unprecedented splendour. Millions of gold coins were given away as gifts and medals with the image of the sacrificial horse were struck to commemorate the occa-

1. History of India, 150 A.D. to 350 A.D., K.P. Jayaswal, p. 206.



sion.<sup>1</sup> Samudragupta was a scholar and sportsman and was well-versed in different branches of learning. He was proficient in song and music and a coin shows him seated on a high-backed couch playing the lyre. He was also a poet and composed many literary works. He conquered large territories and extended his domain far in the south of India. He ruled for nearly fifty years.

### **Glory of the Guptas**

His son Chandragupta followed his father's policy of expansion and was master of about half of India at the time of his greatest power. The great Chinese traveller Fa-Hien travelled in India during his reign. He was a strong and able ruler and possessed in full measure the innate appreciation of the Guptas for arts, literature and physical activities. He was fond of depicting himself as fighting the lion. Chandragupta is held by several scholars to be identical with the traditional hero of India 'Vikramaditya of Ujjain', popular in the folk-lore of our country. Tales and songs of the exploits of Vikramaditya exist in all parts of India, even in the remotest South. It is in his court that the nine gems of Sanskrit literature including the great Kalidasa are said to have flourished. It is during the reign of the Guptas that India attained the highest peak of her glory in arts, literature, architecture and various other branches of human knowledge. The vitality of this age is so great that it passes on from India to South-Eastern Asia and the Far East. In the words of a reputed historian, "almost all that belongs to the common spiritual consciousness of Asia, the ambient in which its diversities are reconcilable, is of Indian origin in the Guptan period."<sup>2</sup>

### **Masculine Character of the Age**

It is interesting to see that the whole note of the Gupta era

1. One of such medals exists in the British museum.

2. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 91.

is masculine. From out of the period of pacifism and non-violence assiduously preached by Asoka and his successors, we emerge as if by magic to a period when the glory of deeds and strength is put forward to the notice of Kshatriyan youths. The epics became tremendously popular and specially the Bhagavad Gita. They put forth a call to the Kshatriyan youths to fulfil their religious duties by warlike deeds rather than by meditation in the seclusion of the monastery. The cry of the age was for action.<sup>1</sup>

“Krishna the champion warrior and man of action, who had delivered his people from the tyrant’s yoke and destroyed the demons who were ravaging the land—the Divine cow-herd, beloved of the village folk—would point the way to MUKTI for everyone by simple devotion to duty instead of Gautama, the Sakya ascetic whose pietism would emasculate the manhood of Aryavarta in the monastic cell.”<sup>2</sup>

### **A Forceful Religion**

Even the religion of the time gathered in itself some of the buoyancy of spirit that characterised the period of the Gupta era and left behind the ‘passive pietism and inert quietism’ of the pre-Guptan Buddhism. “The presiding deity of the Guptas, Lord VISHNU, stands with his hands erect upholding Hindu society with a vigour which knows no lessening. Solid not elegant, become the homes of Hindu gods. Square-built, rock-cut and rock-like temples are preferred to pinnacles.”<sup>3</sup> In short everything belonging to this age of Hindu renaissance pronounces strength and manliness.

The people followed the example of their conquering monarchs.

1. योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ।

(Purity and efficiency in actions is the best form of Yoga).

2. E.B. Havell, *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 155.

3. *History of India, 150 A.D. to 350 A.D.*, K.P. Jayaswal, p. 207.



and the psychology of the nation was entirely changed and the outlook became lofty and magnanimous. "There was nothing feminine in art, literature, piety or politics. The pen portrayed handsome and masculine men, self-conscious and proud Hindu Prussians. Scholars and Brahmins wielded sword and pen with equal facility. Aristocracy of intellect and ability was raised to a height which was hardly repeated again in this land."<sup>1</sup>

### **Renaissance in Physical Culture**

The renaissance of Hinduism characterised by the boundless enthusiasm of the time and the resuscitation of the old Aryan traditions and practices must have breathed new vigour into the mode of Physical Culture as obtained in Guptan time. No longer restrained by the pacific attitude of their religion, the people followed the glorious example set by their brave rulers and indulged in manly sports and physical activities. The vast and immense power of the Guptan militarism could not have been achieved or sustained without the encouragement of health and physical training. The Guptas were imperialists in the strictest sense of the term and they relied on power for the maintenance of their vast kingdom. The first three Guptas and specially Samudragupta were great conquerors and men of marked physical prowess. Their reign should have been followed by great strides in the field of Physical Culture as it was the case with other branches of human attainments. Even a cursory reading of the works of Kalidasa, the greatest of Sanskrit dramatists equal to Shakespeare in universal popularity, would reveal the festivity, joy and love of physical activities that characterised the Guptan era. The Festival of Spring in honour of Kama, the love-god, appears to have been very popular.

### **Origin of Chess**

Gambling which was discouraged by the Buddhists regained

1. History of India, 150 A.D. to 350 A.D., K.P. Jayaswal, p. 206.

its lost influence. The game of dice played independently or in conjunction with board-games grew enormously popular. In the opinion of an authority, the modern game of chess as played in Europe is based upon one of these Indian board-games. According to him dice were played in India "with board games, similar to our (European) children's games such as 'ludo' which involved a combination of chance and skill. By the early centuries of the Christian era one of these, played on a board of sixty-four squares (astapada), had developed into a game of some complexity, with a king-piece, and pieces of four other types corresponding to the corps of the ancient Indian army—an elephant, a horse, a chariot or ship, and four footmen. The original game needed four players and their moves were controlled by the throw of the dice. As the game was played with pieces representing military forces, and its strategy suggested that of campaigning armies, it was known as CATURANGA,<sup>1</sup> or 'four corps'. In the 6th century the game was learnt by the Persians, and when Persia was conquered by the Arabs it quickly spread all over the Middle East, under the name SHATRANJ the Persian corruption of CATURANGA. It developed into a game for two persons, each with two 'armies', the king of one army becoming the 'general' or 'minister' of the other and the use of dice to control the moves was given up. It is not quite certain whether these improvements were made in India or Persia, but the latter is more probable. The game was learnt by the crusaders from the Muslims and soon spread over Europe. By the latter Middle Ages, it had almost attained its modern form as chess, the 'general' of the Muslim game becoming the Queen. Thus the world's most intellectual game is the product of three cultures, each of which contributed something to its finished form."<sup>2</sup>

1. Otherwise CHATURANGA.

2. For details regarding indoor games see "The Wonder that was India", A.C. Basham, ps. 208-209.



We can be fairly certain that this indoor game made its way to the West during the days of the Guptas ; for authorities opine that the magnificent system of Indian arithmetic and Algebra and particularly the decimal system of notation which passed into the West were the contributions of the Guptan era.

### **Popularity of Hunting**

The code of Manu though it must have been compiled some centuries before, may be taken to represent the sociology and polity of India under the Gupta emperors. Strictly according to Manu, hunting was a prohibited pastime but contemporary evidence points out that it enjoyed great patronage. We saw already how Chandragupta the second took pleasure in depicting himself as fighting the lion. Kalidasa in his writings extols the virtue of hunting. The exceeding popularity of hunting as a means of bodily exercise can be deduced from the words of Dandin, a well-known Pallava writer. "There is nothing so beneficial as hunting. It gives the legs magnificent exercise ; and long-winded speed might prove very handy after a defeat ! It dries up the phlegmatic humour ; thus promoting digestion, the sole foundation of health. By reducing fat, it makes the body vigorous, sinewy, agile."

### **Swimming**

Swimming was a popular exercise in India from time immemorial and particularly so in the Guptan era. Dion Chrysostom writing as early as the first century A.D. says : "They (Indians) have besides at hand, water-baths of two kinds; that which is hot and clearer than silver, and the other dark-blue by reason of its depth and coldness. In these the women and children swim about together—all of them models of beauty. Emerging from the bath, I can fancy them lying down in the meadows, commingling their sweet voices in mirth and song. And there the meadows are of ideal loveliness, and

decked by nature with flowers, and with trees, which from overhead cast a protecting shade, and offer fruit within reach of all who would pluck it from the depending branches."<sup>1</sup>

## **Festivals**

The birth of the favourite God of the Guptas, Lord Krishna, was associated with great pomp and festivity. Children dressed themselves like Krishna and his shepherdesses and indulged in music and dancing.

The birth-day of the God Raghava or Rama and the occasion of his victory over the ruler of Lanka was marked by tremendous enthusiasm. Specially the latter event was celebrated with great splendour and a display of arms and physical exercises. This event<sup>2</sup> is still celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the country and it is no wonder that the people of the Guptan era who considered themselves as the champions of Aryan liberty and traditions took delight in the events.

## **Non-availability of details regarding Physical Culture**

The age of the Guptas is to India what the Elizabethan age

1. McCrindle, *Classical Literature*, p. 175.

2. Until recent times, the event of Rama starting on his expedition thwards Lanka was celebrated with military exercises by the Mahrattas. The Mahrattas usually started their military operations on this particular day. The particular incident they commemorated was Rama's devotions and his plucking a branch from a certain tree, before he set out to redeem his wife from the evil hands of the demon-ruler of Lanka. A tree of this sort was planted in an open plain nearby. All the infantry and artillery accompanied the king and nearing the spot a great show of attack was made, the artillery firing and the infantry advancing, and the king plucked a branch from the tree. At a given signal all the soldiers followed the example of their ruler and plucking leaves from the trees fixed it on their head-dresses. Along with this, there were individual and group demonstrations physical feats, stich-fights and sword-play.



is to England, the T'ang age to China and the Golden Age of Pericles to the Republic of ancient Athens. It was marked by an outburst of genius in many fields and its achievements in mathematics, in astronomy, in dramatic and other poetry, in painting and in sculpture, are only in recent times becoming known to the West. Long before the West could recognise them, much of the achievements of the Guptan India passed into China, the Far East and the Arab world. It is indeed most unfortunate that we do not get further details as regards the system of physical culture then current in the Guptan India, for, from all the evidences available we can be almost certain that an excellent system of Physical Education prevailed in India during this period when according to the majority of historians, India was the happiest and most civilized region of the world.

### **Glorious Synthesis or Body and Mind**

At the height of its civilisation the Guptan era represents a glorious synthesis of intellect and physique, equal in its quality to the best days of Athens. The marriage of mind and body as represented in this period has perhaps nothing to equal it, in the whole range of Indian history. India at this period was a land of men noted for the excellence of their physique and keenness of their intellect. People reckoned it disgraceful to be sick and specially the Yogins preferred to put an end to themselves when they fell into that calamity.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed an incalculable loss to Physical Education that no literature dealing with Physical Culture pertaining to this period has come down to posterity. Guptan Hinduism was much different from the Hind-

1. Strabo the Greek writer makes mention of ascetics putting an end to their lives when they fall sick.

Also, it is interesting to note that an Indian ascetic named Zarmanochegas (Sramanacharya) who fell sick burnt himself to death in Athens by about 20 B.C.

uism that prevailed in Mauryan times. It had purged itself, thanks to the chastening influence of Buddhism, from most of its coarse Vedic ritualism and was now much more humane in its approach to wordly problems. It had survived the challenge offered to it by Buddhism but not without some transformation in its contents. The spirit and ideology of Guptan Hinduism was more accommodative to the joint play of materialism and spiritualism or for a matter of that the co-operative function of body and mind in human affairs. In short the climate of this era seems to have been specially prepared for the incidence of a fine school of Physical Education and culture.

### **Asceticism practised only by a few**

A spirit of enquiry and a logical approach to the problems of life were the outcome of this change that had crept into Hinduism. Asceticism of the extreme kind was practised only by a few who retired to the depth of forests to specialise in it and the people in general took a keen and active part in mundane life. The men in charge of the state were noted for their intellect and strength and the ruling kings were great sportsmen and scholars. Even a superficial reader of Guptan history cannot fail to take notice of the animation and spirit that underline this epoch and the extraordinary emphasis laid upon life and activity. Their literature abounds with it, their painting and sculpture speak full of it and the deeds of their monarchs impart inspiration and courage to all who read about it. If even a part of the details as regards the mode of Physical Education that prevailed in Guptan India had been bequeathed to posterity, India and not Greece would have set the lead for the study of Physical Education as it is known today.

### **Reasons for the non-availability of details**

The non-availability of any details can be attributed to two main causes. Firstly our forefathers did not put too much of



trust in the art of writing and believed in treasuring their knowledge more in their minds than in reducing them to writing. Even in the Guptan era the art of writing was not widely practised and the process of learning as in the old Vedic days consisted in 'Sruti' or the gift of hearing. Students learned their lessons by heart and the extraordinary strength of their memory stood them in good stead.

Commenting upon this aspect of Indian Education, E.B. Havell writes : "Now that it is so common to impose literary shibboleths as final tests of culture and political capacity it is interesting to observe that at a time when India had reached the zenith of her creative power in arts and letters, a position at least as high as that reached by any modern state, and had achieved a system of self-government probably as perfect as the world has yet known—if the highest standard of political ethics and the general happiness of the community be accepted as criteria—she found it not only unnecessary but undesirable to make book-learning a test either of literary culture or of political capacity." The above feature of education suited well the genius of our forefathers but unhappily it has deprived us of valuable information regarding the system of their Physical Culture.

### **Physical Education was not a separate study**

Secondly, Physical Education was not a separate study in ancient India. Our ancients disapproved such an isolation and consequently the subject found its place in several branches of study like Medicine, Military Science, Eugenics, Engineering etc. Ancient Indians fully recognised the necessity for a sound physique but they would not permit the dominance of physique over the mind and soul of man. As long as the body worked in unison with the mind and soul of man, it was most welcome and had its due measure of importance ; but if the claim of

body were inordinately loud and attempted to supersede the claims of mind and soul, it was not to be allowed. A rebellion of the body for the practice of its own functions independent of the other aspects of human personality was not to be encouraged. Body had distinct functions in the development of human personality but it was expected to discharge its duties from within the fold of other human faculties and not to build for itself a separate edifice. What was demanded of it was not subservience as several western writers have taken pains to point out but a loyalty for the common cause—practice of 'Dharma.' In such a school of thought there was no place for separate treatises on Physical Culture and naturally there is a dearth of literature exclusively devoted to the subject.

It is anyhow very interesting to observe the intimate relationship that existed between the study of medicine and Physical Education in ancient India. To Charaka, a great teacher of Ayurveda, goes the credit of giving a really competent definition as regards 'health'. Discussing the qualities of a healthy man, Charaka writes at the beginning of the chapter dealing with the prevention of disease : "A person, who is always regular in his food and habits, rest and recreation, who thinks twice before he does any act, who is not entangled in any vice, who is of a charitable disposition, who treats all living beings on an equality, who is truthful, who has forbearance and who is contented with what he gets, is always healthy."<sup>1</sup>

Susruta in the course of his writing is never tired of stressing the need of Physical exercises for the restoration of the health

1. नित्यं हिताहारविहारसेवी ।  
 समीक्ष्यकारी विषयेषु असक्तः ॥  
 दातासमः सत्यपरः क्षमावान् ।  
 आप्तोपसेवी च भवति अरोगः ॥



of the patients. According to him Physical Education should be a compulsory subject for all the students in all the educational institutions of the country. Nothing in his opinion is equal to 'Vyayam' (physical exercise) in giving complexion to the body, strength and shape to muscles, keen appetite and lightness of body, and in warding off laziness and in giving the power of enduring hard work, mental strain, thirst, cold or heat.<sup>1</sup>

The following are some select quotations from Charaka to illustrate the high esteem in which Physical Culture was held in ancient India.<sup>2</sup>

(1) Just as a lion is not approached by minor animals, so a gymnast is not approached by diseases.

(2) Even a person who is unattractive by reason of his age, features or conduct, presents a pleasing appearance, if he regularly performs physical exercise.

1. शरीरोपचयः कान्तिर्गात्राणां सुविभक्तता

दीप्ताग्नित्वमनालस्यं स्थिरत्वं लाघवं मृजा ॥

Susruta Samhita, Chapter 24, slokam 39.

2. (1) व्याधयो नोपसर्पति । सिंहं क्षुद्रमृगा इव ॥

Susruta Samhita, Chapter 24, slokam 43, page 396.

(2) वयोरूपगुणौर्हो नमपि कुर्यात्सुदर्शनम् ॥

Susruta Samhita, Chapter 24, slokam 44, p. 396.

(3) व्यायामं कुर्वतो नित्यं विरुद्धमपि भोजनम् ।

विदग्धं आविदग्धं वा निर्दोषं परिपच्यते ।

Susruta Samhita, Chapter 24, slokam 44 & 45, p. 396.

(4) न चास्ति सदृशं तेन किञ्चित्स्थूल्यपकर्षणम् ।

Susruta Sahita, Chapter 24, slokam 41, p. 396.

(5) न च्यायामिनं मर्त्यं । अर्दयन्ति अरयो भयात् ।

Susruta Samhita, Chapter 24, slogam 41, p. 396.

(6) न चरानं सहसा क्राम्य । जरा समधिरोहति ॥

(Susruta Samhita, Ch. 24, slokam 42, p. 396.)

(3) If a person takes physical exercises daily, even the food, which is unwholesome, over-cooked or under-cooked, is easily digested.

(4) There is nothing equal to Physical exercises for reducing stoutness of body.

(5) Enemies are afraid to approach one who regularly practises physical exercise.

(6) Old age does not encroach upon such a man easily.

We shall now examine briefly the system of education, social conditions and food habits of the people in the Guptan era.

### SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN GUPTAN TIMES

There seems to have been no appreciable change in the system of education. Nalanda became a great seat of learning and it was renowned alike for the magnificence of its establishment and the intellectual as well as moral pre-eminence of its inmates. Hiuen Tsang notes the unique fact that since the establishment of the monastery there was not a single case of breach of its discipline. The reputation of Nalanda attracted students from abroad, but so strict was the entrance examination that only two or three out of ten succeeded in securing admission. The Gupta monarchs patronised Nalanda liberally and it is said that the revenues of about a hundred villages were endowed for its maintenance.

#### Education of Princes

According to I-tsing, the Chinese traveller, who was a contemporary of Hiuen Tsang, children started their education at their sixth year. Grammar formed the major part of the course of studies. Otherwise the curriculum of studies was almost the same as obtained in the preceding age. Princes of royal blood received a slightly different type of education.



Unfortunately, we have little direct knowledge of the education of princes in the Guptan age. However from the enthusiastic accounts given by Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta, and in later times by Bana the biographer of Harsha regarding the all-round proficiency of their respective royal masters, we can have some glimpses of the type of education, the princes received. If the brother princes of Samudragupta and Harsha attained even a part of the mastery of their counterparts, then, their education must have been really of a high standard. There is no doubt anyhow that attention was paid to the health and physical activities of the students whether they were princes or boys belonging to the lower strata of society.

### SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND FOOD HABITS

Kalidasa in his 'Megha Dudham' called Ujjain, the capital of the Guptas, a piece of heaven on earth.

“Oh, fine Ujjain, Gem to Avanti given,  
Where village ancients tell their tales of mirth,  
And old romance ! Oh, radiant bit of heaven  
Home of a blest celestial band whose worth  
Sufficed, though fallen from heaven to bring down  
  heaven on earth !”  
(Tr. by A.N. Ryder)

Fa-Hien gives testimony to the peace and prosperity of the times. The fact that the Guptas found it possible to do away with corporal punishment, which in modern age we are unable to follow, is enough of a testimony to the advanced state of their culture. As already mentioned, tillers of the soil followed their occupations unharassed by Government officials and they were not bound by serfdom. Taxation was light and food available in plenty. Caste-restrictions grew stricter and the Brahmins were strictly forbidden to marry Sudra women. There was anyhow no absolute bar to inter-marriage between the different castes.

## **Position of Women**

As for the women in Guptan society their lot appears to have been much better than in the preceding age. With the revival of Aryan traditions and practices, they regained much of the dignity and prestige enjoyed by their sex in the Vedic society. But in the view of Manu, the old Aryan law-giver, "a woman is never fit for independence." They were to be under the protection of their fathers in childhood, their husbands in their youth, and their sons in old age. Though the laws of Manu were widely accepted in Guptan times as the canons for the conduct of the state and society, it is not supposed that all the edicts contained therein were strictly translated in practice. The puritan code of the ancient law-giver sometimes reflects his personal views rather than the practical politics of the state or the conditions of the then society. We have enough evidence to the fact that women enjoyed freedom and honour in the Guptan society. "Now once more women became the object of high honour and a political partner" writes Jayaswal. "In coins and inscriptions she is given equality. Wife was never so honoured as Samudra Gupta honoured Dattadevi. In the greatest moment of his triumph at Eran, the Emperor of All-India proudly remembered his life partner and the day of his marriage when her dowry consisted of only the manliness of her lord and whose grandeur now consisted in being the ideal Hindu woman, the KULA-VADHU, surrounded by sons and grandsons."

## **Love of Common People for Physical Exercises**

As regards people in general, we learn from contemporary accounts that they were remarkable for their qualities of honesty, courage and love of learning.

People led clean and comfortable lives and the standard of health attained was high. There was a widespread love for



manly exercises and both the princes and the common-folk attended gymnasiums. In KADAMBARI<sup>1</sup> we find the mention of a palace-gymnasium (VYAYAMABHUMI).

### Personal Hygiene

Hiuen Tsang in his account of India mentions various sanitary rules observed by the people for their personal cleanliness. I-tsing gives details of the sanitary practices and personal comforts of the people. According to him the floor of Indian houses were purified with cow-dung and strewn with seasonal flowers. The practice is yet followed in thousands of Indian homes specially in the rural areas. Even today on auspicious occasions Hindus sprinkle water with the aid of neem leaves and our ancestors evidently were aware of the disinfectant properties of the neem leaves. According to I-tsing the Indians washed before every meal, threw away or polished utensils after use, and cleaned their teeth with the aid of sticks every morning. They were scrupulously clean in their personal habits and were very regular in bathing. Drinking water was kept in earthenware, or porcelain jar while water for cleansing purposes was kept in copper or iron vessels. In short the Indians of this epoch practised personal hygiene of a high standard.

### Food Habits

Commenting upon the food habits of the people Fa Hien writes: "The people of this country kill no living creature nor do they drink intoxicating liquors; and with the exception of the CHANDALAS they eat neither garlic nor onions... In this country they do not keep swine or fowls, they do not deal in living animals, nor are there shambles or wine shops round their markets. The Chandalas alone go hunting and deal in fish."

1. A Play by Bana Bhatta.

Buddhism had obviously effected a transformation in Hinduism and left its stamp on the manners and morals of the people. Brahmins were strictly forbidden from eating flesh except on special occasions on which sacrificial meat was allowed. Even among vegetables such as garlic, onions, leeks and mushrooms were not favoured. According to Manu nothing was more sinful on the part of a man than 'to increase his own flesh with the flesh of another creature' not offered as a sacrifice to the gods or to his ancestors (V. 52). Food was to be eaten reverently, after ablution and prayer, and without excess. "Excessive eating is prejudicial to health, to fame, and to bliss in heaven; it is injurious to virtue and odious among men," (II, 57). Though the people were predominantly vegetarians, classes other than the Brahmins were not averse to taking meat in spite of the injunctions of Manu. Even as regards Brahmins they were not prohibited from taking meat when it was given in sacrifice to gods.

### **Influence of the Huns**

During the reign of the later Guptas, India was invaded by the Huns. Of the vast hordes of the wild Huns that set fire, destroyed and pillaged the civilised cities of the Indus plain, the name of one deserves to be remembered. It is Toramana, a Hun chieftain, who abandoned the predatory habits of his race and adopted Indo-Aryan royal titles and customs. He wrested Punjab and the frontier provinces from the decadent Guptan Empire and ruled them in comparative peace. He appears to have been a sagacious ruler. Though the power of the Huns was short-lived and they do not have any place in our history as an independent ruling race, the effect of a century of Hun incursions left its influence upon the sociology and polity of North India. A large number of the invaders settled peacefully in India and as it is the case with all the foreign elements that



made an inroad into India they were soon absorbed by the extraordinary power of assimilation which she always possessed.

There is reason to believe that the introduction of this barbarian blood affected the high ethical standard of ancient Indian traditions and favoured the growth of many of the vulgar superstitions which were never tolerated by the early Aryan society. This corruption of ancient Indian society must have done considerable damage to India's culture. The name of the Huns in India's history is associated with pillage and plunder and the damage caused to our culture firstly by their incursions and later by their absorption into our society must have been also shared by our system of physical culture; for, physical culture was highly esteemed by the Guptan people and formed an integral part of their civilisation. The element of terror found in certain forms of physical activities as manifested in violent and irregular bodily movements and contortions, dangerous and unprincipled displays with various weapons, fearsome acrobatics, fire drills by cavalry, head-hunting etc., possibly owe their origin to foreigners like the Huns who invaded India from time to time.

After the break-up of the Gupta Empire, Northern India presented the usual picture of political disintegration with several small independent states struggling for supremacy. It was not till the beginning of the seventh century A.D. that Harsha Vardhana once again succeeded in establishing a big empire and bringing back to certain extent that political unity and solidarity which Northern India enjoyed during the period of the Guptas. The intervening period before the establishment of an empire by Harsha is not much significant from the point of view of our survey of Physical Education in India and we shall therefore proceed to examine the conditions of the physical activities of the people during the period of Harsha Vardhana.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### HARSHA AND HIS TIMES

The travel-diary of Hieun Tsang who toured India during the reign of Harsha and the biography of the emperor by BANA BHATTA, the court poet, are the two main sources of information regarding the period of Harsha Vardhana. The Chinese traveller came to India for the purpose of collecting religious literature and images connected with Buddhism. His zeal for Buddhism wellnigh bordered on fanaticism and consequently his accounts dealing with his religious experiences in India are grossly exaggerated and are often misleading. Anyhow on matters unrelated to religion, the writings of the Chinese traveller are characterised by a keen sense of observation and impartiality. The second source of information *viz.* Bana's HARSHA-CHARITA is the work of a court poet and naturally the writer eulogises the qualities and achievements of his patron and therefore it is to be accepted with reservation. But both the works are undoubtedly of great historical value and throw light upon the life, manners, customs and the mode of physical activities of the people who lived during that period.

#### **Tolerance of the Emperor**

Harsha came to power by about 606 A. D. after the death of his brother. He ruled for about forty years and was ably assisted by his sister Rajasri who was a devout Buddhist and noted for great learning and intelligence. In his personal religion Harsha had a leaning towards Buddhism. He showed nevertheless great toleration in the matter of religion and did not persecute other religious sects.

The country enjoyed during the long reign of Harsha great prosperity and the Chinese traveller like his predecessor who toured India during the rule of the Guptas two centuries earlier, found good roads and free rest houses with food and medical attendance provided for needy travellers.

### **Scholar and Sportsman**

The Emperor was a man of versatile talents and was equally skilful with the pen as with the sword. He was a poet of no mean ability, and his songs set to music by himself became popular throughout the land. He is credited with the authorship of three Sanskrit plays, 'RATNAVALI', 'NAGANDA' and 'PRIYADARSIKA' which can be read with interest even to-day. Harsha is indeed a unique example of the blending of music and action, a synthesis of body and mind which was the ideal of Plato and also of the Indo-Aryan philosophers. Unlike Asoka he did not absolutely abandon himself to the cause of religion. He was very active in the discharge of administrative duties, spending most of the year making tours of inspection throughout his dominions. Compared with the other great monarchs, the army of Harsha was small in size but it was noted for its efficiency and strength. From all available evidences it is clear that Harsha preferred to follow in general the policy of the Guptas rather than that of the Mauryas. He did not allow himself or his people to succumb to the softening influence of religion at the cost of the fighting strength of the country. "Like the great Moghul Emperor Akbar, Harsha extended toleration to all, held religious discussions with the leading doctors of all creeds and was, like him, perfectly indifferent to the higher call of religion. . . Like Akbar, again, Harsha was a military monarch for the greater part of his reign."<sup>1</sup>

1. Sri Harsha of Kanauj—By K.M. Panikkar.



## Hiuen-Tsang

As for the Chinese traveller himself he was a young man of about 30 years when he arrived in India and one of his chief aims was to study the science of YOGA in the great university of Nalanda. Sixteen years elapsed before HIUEN-TSANG returned to China and during this period he travelled hundreds of miles on foot in all sorts of climates and visited scores of important cities both in the north and south of India. He was a man of great courage and strength and his life is indeed one of the romances of world history. Impelled by his insatiable thirst for knowledge this remarkable man, in pursuit of it, underwent great hardships of life and was in imminent peril of his life more than once. He was once seized along with his companions by river pirates. Finding him to be of fine physique and noble carriage the pirates wanted to offer him as a sacrifice to their Goddess. Fortunately the pilgrim had a narrow escape.

## Pulekesin and His People

During the major part of his reign the power of Harsha remained supreme in North India and it was only when he sought to expand his territories in the south that he was defeated in battle by PULEKESIN II of the Chalukya dynasty who ruled in Maharashtra. Pulekesin was a great soldier and extended great patronage to physical activities. The strength, courage and manliness of his subjects are testified by the accounts of the Chinese traveller. "The climate of the country was hot and the people, who were tall of stature and had a stern and vindictive character, were honest and simple. They were fond of learning, were grateful to their benefactors and relentless to their enemies. If asked to help one in distress, they would forget themselves in their haste to render assistance. If insulted, they would risk their lives to avenge themselves ; but while seeking revenge, they would first give their enemy warning and then, both being armed, they would attack each other with spears. They would

pursue the enemy when he turned to flee, but would not kill a person who submitted."

About their method of warfare Hiuen-Tsang writes : "If a general loses a battle, they do not inflict punishment, but present him with woman's clothes and so he is driven to seek death for himself. The country provides for a band of champions to the number of several hundreds. Each time they are about to engage in conflict they intoxicate themselves with wine, and then one man with lance in hand will meet ten thousand and challenge them to fight. If one of these champions meets a man and kills him, the laws of the country do not punish him. Every time they go forth, they beat drums before them. Moreover, they inebriate many hundred heads of elephants and taking them out to fight, they themselves first drink their wine, and then rushing forward in mass they trample everything down, so that no enemy can stand before them. The king in consequence of his possessing these men and elephants treats his neighbours with contempt."<sup>1</sup>

### **Mahamalla the Wrestler-king**

Another great contemporary of Harsha was Narasimhavarman known as MAHAMALLA for his great prowess in the art of wrestling. He belonged to the Pallava dynasty which ruled in the South. Their dynastic history matters little to us but the eminence which the Pallava Empire achieved by the middle of the fifth century A.D. and continued to the middle of the eighth century is a matter of supreme importance to India. Several of the Pallava kings were great soldiers, poets, patrons of literature and sportsmen. Narasimhavarman was an outstanding wrestler and winner of many bouts. He defeated Pulekesin, the victor of Harsha, and occupied his capital VATAPI. He is known in historical inscriptions as 'VATAPIKONDA' Nara-

1. As cited in the *History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol. III, p. 239.



simhan (Narasimhan who took the city of VATAPI). The contribution of the Pallavas to Indian culture and civilisation is in every sense unique. MAHABALIPURAM or MAVALI-PURAM in the Chingleput district of the Madras state reputed for its sculptural excellence is named after the wrestler-king of the Pallava dynasty.

### **Kanchi under the Pallavas**

The capital of the Pallavas was Kanchi and the town as it exists today, attests to its greatness in times past. Under the Pallavas it was one of the most magnificent towns of India, and a popular Sanskrit ditty says that as KALIDASA is the greatest of poets and the GANGES the most sacred of rivers, so KANCHI is the most beautiful of all cities. Hiuen-Tsang who visited this city pays his tributes when he says that the people "were courageous, thoroughly trustworthy and public-spirited, and they esteemed great learning."<sup>1</sup> Dharmapala, who was the Head Abbot of the great university of Nalanda, was a citizen of Kanchi.

### **Educational during the time of Harsha Vardhana**

Education was widely diffused in this period. We saw that a great revival of learning took place under the rule of the Guptas. The impetus of this movement appears to have lasted for another two centuries. India in the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries must have been one of the most educated countries in the world. The Buddhist monks took great interest in the spread of education and hundreds of monasteries in the country were engaged in the task of educating the public. According to the Chinese traveller, in Kanauj alone there were some hundreds of monasteries. Every monastery was a sort of college in which comprehensive education involving many subjects was imparted.

1. Beal "On Yuan Chwang," Vol. II, p. 226-228.

The University of Nalanda which received the patronage of the later Guptas, was at the height of its glory when Hiuen-Tsang resided in it to study the YOGA SASTRA.

### **University of Nalanda**

Though Nalanda was devoted to Buddhist learning, the teaching there was not carried on in a sectarian spirit. Among the subjects studied there were the Vedas, Grammar, Logic, Mathematics, Medicine etc. The system of education in the country was evidently a mixture of vocational and classical training. The earlier training was essentially secular and the children of ordinary men irrespective of their religion went through a course of secular studies before they proceeded to higher learning.

### **Brahminical System of Education**

As regards the Brahminical system of education, it was based as usual on the Vedic pattern. The Chinese pilgrim is full of praise for the Brahmin teachers who took great pains to instruct their pupils. They inspired their pupils to exert themselves and led them forward step by step. "They instruct the inert and sharpen the dull." They took particular care in teaching boys who were backward in their studies. There was a different set of teachers who led the life of 'Sadhus' wandering from place to place. Some of them were men of means but they preferred a life of poverty and lived apart from the world unmoved by honour or reproach. "For them there is honour in knowing truth and no disgrace in being destitute."<sup>1</sup> They indeed represent the unique love for learning and wisdom that characterised India of ancient days. Havell in praise of them writes : "Wandering continually from place to place, no fatigue was too great when an opportunity offered of gaining knowledge or of using their own for helping others. Those who were famed for their wisdom

1. Walter's translation of Hiuen-Tsang, Vol. I, p. 162.



were treated with the highest respect ; but not even the honours which kings could bestow tempted them to forsake the path of knowledge. The influence of these pious men must have been felt far beyond the borders of India, for they recognised no political barriers nor any distinctions of race.”<sup>1</sup>

The teachers and pupils of both the systems of education, Buddhist as well as Brahminical, lived hard lives that required a great amount of physical energy and endurance. A spartan simplicity prevailed in educational institutions and there was an absolute and widespread belief in the motto that “the Atman is not attainable by the weak.”

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः

Though at this stage of India's history, games and sports did not emerge with codified rules and regulations as in modern days, it was largely accepted that work for the brain should be followed with adequate exercise for the body.

### **Social Conditions**

It should be borne in mind that the revival of Brahminism which had taken place under the Guptas and which had contributed to the gradual but nonetheless steady displacement of Buddhism influenced the religion and sociology of this period. Though in his personal religion, Harsha was a Buddhist, he was powerless to stem the growth of Brahminic Hinduism even if he had wished it. The comparative peace of Harsha's reign witnessed improvement in arts, literature, architecture and other fine arts. The people followed the example of the Emperor and unhindered by the restraining influence of religion, practised manifold activities—physical as well as intellectual.

Inter-caste marriages were not uncommon and the marriage of the higher caste men with the women of the lower castes, as long as they were within the recognised VARNAS, was not

1. E.B. Havell : *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 198.

disallowed. Discussing his ancestry BANA the Brahmin court poet of Harsha is not afraid to confess that some of his relatives were of Sudra origin.

The country was full of roads which were reasonably safe for travel. This may be inferred from the fact that the pilgrim from China was able to travel all over the country from one end to the other almost unattended. It would be anyhow a mistake to presume that anything like an efficient police organisation as it exists today was in service in those far off days. Robberies were not uncommon as evidenced by the unfortunate accident that happened to Hiuen Tsang which we noted earlier in this section.

There was no appreciable change in the food habits of the people and the practices of the Guptan days appear to have prevailed.

### **Place of Women**

We have not much historical evidence to ascertain the status of women. From the literature of the period we can anyhow be fairly certain that they continued as in the days of the Guptas to occupy a place of honour in society. That widows were not looked down in social life can be guessed by the example of Rajasri, the sister of Harsha, who enjoyed great popularity for her learning and accomplishments. Early marriages must have been the custom of the society. Rajasri was married in childhood and she was a widow before she attained the age of 15.



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## CHAPTER IX

### STATUS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE MUSLIMS

The death of Harsha about the beginning of 648 A. D. broke up the empire he had created. It led to the Arab conquest of Sind. An Arab army under the command of Mohammad Bin Kassim defeated the Hindu king of Sind and gained a foot hold in India for Islam. The power of the Arabs in India was anyhow shortlived and just like the conquest of Alexander the Great it was a passing phase in the history of India and a "triumph without results." It left no great impression on her political history. The real danger that awaited India from Muslim arms and a permanent occupation of the country by Islamic troops was not before another about three centuries when the hosts of Muhmud of Ghazni poured into India. The cultural results of the Arab conquest are anyhow important as the Arabs learnt a lot from the ancient civilisation of India and spread the knowledge they inherited on our soil, all over Europe. They formed the bridge between the East and the West.

#### **The Contribution of Arabs**

The Arab race formed the 'civilising leaven in the uncultured world of Islam' as it existed then and they must have had in their turn to contribute something to the culture of our country specially in the sphere of physical activities; for, they were noted for their strength, courage and warlike qualities acquired in the hardy regions and unfriendly climate of their country. Whatever their contribution might have been, no trace of them is left to us,



all of them probably being destroyed in the wake of the terrific onslaughts launched by the later Muslim conquerors.

### **Long Period of Peace and its Consequences**

With the exception of the Arabic conquest which as we noted was temporary, India was for over five hundred years free from the threat of external aggression. Scarcely do we find in the history of the world any other country so much free from warfare for so long a period at a stretch. This long period of peace had unfortunately its evil consequences for India. Long accustomed to peace and plenty the people lived under a facile feeling that there was no question of their country being ever invaded by foreigners. "Eternal vigilance which is the price of freedom had weakened to vanishing point and the Hindus of the seventh to the eleventh centuries had as a result lost completely the sense of patriotism and national honour which grow up only under the stimulus of danger from outside. The author of Vishnu Purana sang the glory of India of Bharata Varsha because at the time Bharata Varsha was something to be defended and fought for. To the authors of the period that followed Bana, it meant but little, for, even the themes of literature had become parochial instead of the birth of the war god or the fight of Arjuna with Siva."<sup>1</sup>

This false sense of security and the feeling that India was 'ordained by God to remain safe' led to decadence that affected all spheres of activity. India was no longer the school wherein the foreigners flocked to learn the fruits of her age-long culture. She remained exclusive and cut off from foreign contacts. Alberuni, a Muslim writer, complains: "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs... if they travelled and mixed with other nations they would soon change their mind."

1. A Survey of Indian History, K. M. Panikkar, p. 129.

## **Effects of Buddhism on the Manhood of the Country**

Further the caste system had become much hardened and stood in the way of national growth and development. Buddhism as long as it was in the hands of able emperors like Kanishka and Harsha was not allowed to endanger the national manhood and strike at the roots of national defence with its pacific doctrines. But once the sagacious and discriminative patronage of the great emperors was withdrawn, Buddhism sought its own methods for establishing itself as a religious force in this country which of course it failed to achieve. The monastic organisation of Buddhism always contained in itself the seed for the emasculation of the manhood of India and only the vigilant eyes of India's emperors in the past had saved her from such a disaster. Buddhism after the death of Harsha deteriorated rapidly in its quality, chiefly due to the moral weakness of its adherents. The conquest of Sind by the Arabs was rendered possible by the fact that thousands of the male population had adopted the yellow robe for the sake of easy life of the monastery. Buddhism had by now completely lost its national identity and ceased to be of any great consequence in the land of its creation. The centre of Buddhist influence was shifted to China and the spiritual head of the religion in India transferred his seat to Canton.

## **The Caste System**

The caste system as envisaged by its originators was more for the specialisation of occupation and in the past ages it was not strictly enforced ; but by the time of Harsha's death it came to be accepted as a divine sanction and conformed to with a rigidity which would well have surprised Manu himself. As long as it was not enforced with rigidity it served its purpose efficiently, specially in the task of defending the nation from foreign assaults, for it assigned to the Kshatriyas the duty of taking up the national defence. As long as the barriers of



caste were as easy to overcome as they were in pre-Muhammadan days, it served India well. It was more or less the selection of the fittest for the different vocations of life. The efficiency of the Kshatriya class was seriously impaired by the withdrawal of the flower of manhood to the seclusion of the monasteries. Nor does the blame solely belong to Buddhism. The Hindu Mutts established by great reformers like Sankara soon lost the traditions of the masters and became centres of luxury like the Buddhist monasteries. They assumed pontifical dignities and interfered in the secular and political affairs of the realm. "The Sanyasis became a burden on society. Their numbers increased, superstition fed them ; common people paid them reverence. With the majority it became an easy method of life."<sup>1</sup> The great author of Arthasastra had foreseen this danger of religious organisations interfering in political matters outside their jurisdiction and he laid down a law forbidding the entry of any but local co-operative guilds into the villages of the Mauryan empire. India soon paid the penalty for ignoring his mandate.

### **Position of Women and Literature**

The position of women had deteriorated and the rigours of widowhood were strictly enforced. The growth of the Devadasi system, a bane on the womanhood of India, can be traced to this period. Widowed women like Rajasri no longer took part in the social and cultural activities of the country. Even in the literature pertaining to this period we see a marked decadence. They are full of sensuous descriptions and pay more attention to the softer side of life. They are strikingly in contrast to the virile and masculine life portrayed in the literature pertaining to the Guptan era. The spirit of patriotism and a sense of nationality is manifestly absent.

1. A Survey of Indian History, K.M. Panikkar, p. 133.

### **Low Ebb of Physical Activities**

The atmosphere of national life described above is hardly the climate for the growth of Physical Education. It is not surprising therefore that in the years preceding the Muslim conquest the status of physical culture in India was in a low level. And it is most unfortunate too ; for, in the years to follow the fertile and civilised states of Northern India experienced a disaster like of which the country had never witnessed before. Hordes of Muslim armies under the command of Mahmud of Ghazni and Mahommed of Ghor made repeated inroads into India, laid waste her populous cities, pillaged, plundered and looted her riches and civilisation. Stately buildings and monasteries, temples and libraries which were the results of centuries of Indian civilisation and culture were destroyed and the country hardly recovered from the blow given to her by Muslim arms. It is indeed a tragic episode in Indian history that at a time when a good system of physical culture and discipline could have stood her in good stead and defended her from foreign incursions, the conditions of Physical Education in India was at one of its lowest ebbs.

### **Muslim Conquest of India**

Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni who considered himself as a champion of the new faith led his armies several times into India. He was motivated by the prospect of plunder and the fanaticism for destroying the temples of the Hindus. He inflicted much destruction on the famous cities of Thanesar, Kanauj and Muttra, the last being sacred to Krishna and for a thousand years the centre of an unparalleled artistic culture. We shall not deal here with the military expeditions of Mahmud of Ghazni which constitute a wearisome tale of plunder and bloodshed. They bear no importance in the survey of Physical Education in India except the revelation they make of the depravity of the times and the poor state of India's defence



consequent on the deterioration of the moral and physical qualities of the people.

### **Helplessness of the People**

Six centuries before Samudragupta had inscribed on one of the pillars of Asoka the following words : "Skilled in hundred battles, relying only on the strength of his right arm he captured and liberated the kings of Kosala and many others and with violence exterminated many in the North, reducing to serfdom the kings of the Forest states both East and West." We read in another inscription: "By him the whole tribe of kings on earth were overthrown and bereft of their sovereignty!" In less than six centuries India was in a state of turmoil and her glories had fled. She stood helpless now, utterly powerless to stop the progress of the Muhammadan marauders who plundered her wealth and destroyed her temples with absolute impunity. This is indeed a warning history offers that the neglect of the physique and the art of self-defence is almost invariably followed by a penalty which every nation on earth must pay sooner or later.

### **Religion Unchecked**

From the seventh century to the time of Mahmud of Ghazni, Hindu monarchs in India were occupied in prolific religious activities. It was the time when the kings of India vied with each other in the magnificence and number of their temples, when sacred hills were converted into cities of the gods and when hundreds of thousands of skilled artisans were diverted from ordinary industrial pursuits to the pious labour of elaborating the embellishment of the temple service in stone, bronze, precious metals and costly fabrics. Religion alone occupied the minds of the rulers and they lacked the ability and sound common-sense which the earlier emperors of India like Samudragupta and Harsha possessed in full measure. Harsha Vardhana and Samudragupta were no less religious than these rulers but they

possessed the wisdom to harness religion to the service of the nation as a whole. They had the intelligence which made them aware of the danger that would arise if the religious forces were diversified from the common interests of the realm. They kept religion under check and never allowed it to interfere in politics and thereby weaken the strength of the nation. Religion under the Guptas was a potent force that stimulated patriotism and a sense of national honour and unity. In the less able hands of Harsha's successors religion catered only to the mind and spirit of men and disinherited the claims of body.

### **Traditions regarding Prithviraj**

From the death of Mahmud of Ghazni to Mohammed of Ghor's invasion of India in 1191, for a period of hundred and sixty years India, apart from the Punjab, was undisturbed by Muslim invasions. During this period of peace India made some valiant efforts to recapture the greatness she had lost. The Rajputs who occupy a prominent place in India's history for their courage and chivalry were coming into prominence. Monarchs such as Bhoja of Malwa, Jaichand of Kanauj and Prithviraj Chauhan of Ajmer and Delhi ruled during this period. The name of Prithviraj brings to our mind the popular tradition connected with his marriage. Jaichand, the king of Kanauj, had chosen one of the numerous suitors and for formality had arranged the traditional Indo-Aryan ceremony of SWAYAMVARA, the bride's own choice. Prithviraj, in spite of the deadly feud which existed between the two houses, received an invitation like the rest of the Rajput princes but on account of the intentional arrogance of his letter, Jaichand did not dream that Prithviraj would appear. In derision he put up a statue of him as the door-keeper of the tournament. The princess who was secretly in love with the king of Delhi, passed by all her suitors and threw the bridal garland over the neck of the statue. At the same time Prithviraj



with a few chosen retainers dashed into the arena, and in the confusion which ensued carried off the bride under the eyes of the infuriated father, in spite of the efforts of the Kanauj warriors to prevent them.

The above account whether true or not throws light upon the fact that 'Swayamvara', the traditional Kshatriya ceremony which as we saw was very familiar in the epic days, still survived in India.

### **Further Muslim Conquest**

Mahommed Ghorî followed the footsteps of Sultan Mahmud and invaded India in A.D. 1191. He lost the battle in his first encounter chiefly due to the courage and martial valour of the Rajputs. But disunity among the Rajput clans led to further Muslim conquests. The history of the Islamic conquest of India can be summarised in a few lines. After his victory over the princes of North of India headed by Prithviraj, Mahommed left behind Kutubuddin as his governor. He occupied Delhi and made it the seat of his government. In 1194 Kanauj was occupied by the Muslims. Soon Bihar was reduced and as a consequence the University of Nalanda and its great and unique library which contained the acquisition of many centuries were utterly destroyed. Bengal and Bundelkhand followed suit and fell a prey to Muslim arms. Thus in a period of five years Mahommed of Ghorî, through his governor Kutubuddin, ruled over an Empire in India which included the Punjab, the Gangetic plains and Bengal. Sultan Mahommed died in 1206. Kutubuddin who was a slave of the Sultan succeeded him as a ruler of the Indian provinces. The dynastic history of the Sultans of Delhi from Kutubuddin's death in 1210 to Babar's conquest of Delhi in 1525 is one of dull monotony, of wars of succession, murders of nobles and leading men and a few able men succeeded by weak and corrupt rulers.

## Sultans of Delhi

The sultans of Delhi patronised physical activities. As a matter of fact the Turkish or Pathan sultans and their deputies revelled in an adventurous open-air life which involved strenuous physical exercise. Contending that Islamic architecture in India is not as original as it is supposed to be, E.B. Havell writes : "The proselytising swordsmen of the Prophet would have scorned to claim the merit which modern dilettante thrust upon them. Their interests were in the battlefield, in the chase and in an adventurous open air life.<sup>1</sup> Their love for physical activities is borne out from the method in which Kutubuddin the founder of the slave dynasty met his death. His horse fell upon him as he was playing CHAUGAN or Polo and the high pommel of the saddle pierced his breast inflicting a wound so severe that he died almost immediately.

## Policy of a Conquering Race

It should be remembered that the Muslims in India were a conquering race as the British in later times and they were inferior in number in proportion to the population of the country they occupied. They were keen in maintaining a well-organised and disciplined fighting force to keep in check the rebellious elements of the subject country. While they were keen in encouraging physical activities among their soldiery, it is quite improbable they gave the same amount of enthusiasm for the promotion of physical culture among the subjects over whom they ruled. It is quite contrary to the dictum of practical politics to encourage physical training among the subject population by a ruling race. The stringent regulations governing the possession of fire-arms and lethal weapons and the hesitation to encourage physical activities and arts of self-

1. Aryan Rule in India, E.B. Havell, p. 296.



defence on a nation-wide scale by the British in India illustrate this known policy of a ruling bureaucracy.

### **Physical Activities during the Muslim Rule**

The period of Muslim rule in India did not lack in physical training or physical activities, but the term of Physical Education can hardly be applied to their mode of training the body. From all available evidence we can be fairly certain that training of the body during the Muslim rule, was not held to be a part of the education of the people. The MAK TABS (Primary Schools) and MADRASAS (High Schools) of the Muslims in India did not encourage Physical Education in the true sense of the term. The age-long connection of Physical Education with general education as obtained in India was severed, and separated from the parent stalk, Physical Education lost its dignity and was reduced to a state of crude muscle-play. Instances of Muslim patronage to games and athletics are not wanting. For example Sultan Firoz Shah "encouraged witnessing athletic performance as a diversion."<sup>1</sup> But the real meaning and significance of games and sports and their educational factor was past the realisation of the swarthy Muslim conquerors of India.

### **The Sword of Islam offers a correction**

With a few exceptions the rule of the Sultans of Delhi is a long chain of tyranny, cruelty and debauch. India which had reached the peak of her glory in civilisation and culture had hardly anything to learn from the early disciples of the Prophet. She had more to give than take. But the chastisement India received at the hands of the Muslim invaders was not altogether without benefits. Whatever be the contribution of the Muslims to India's arts and civilisation, she received an undeniable advan-

1. Cited by J. P. Thomas in his *Organisation and Administration of Physical Education*, p. 4.

tage in the sphere of physical culture. The long period of bloodshed and destruction which followed the Mohammadan invasions though it was an unmitigated disaster for the country, contained in itself a cleansing agent for the purification of Hindu society. Behind the apparent ruin caused by the blind rage of the Mohammadan fanatics the true student of history might well see a new impulse for the progress of human race. Hindu culture in the field it had created for itself had reached the zenith. It showed distinct signs of old-age and had started to decay. It had little more to absorb and attained the point of saturation. The metaphysical flights of Hinduism had become too abstruse for the understanding of the masses. It had lost touch with the common man and assumed the familiar garb of an intellectual tyranny. The fine balance that was preserved between mind and body got upset and the scale dipped further and further on the side of the mind. The high-brow intellectualism and the ritualistic mysticism of Hinduism was quite different from the happy and robust philosophy of the Guptan days. Allowed to continue in that strain Hinduism could have damaged the physical well-being of the nation which it had itself tried to rescue from the excessive pietism of Buddhism. The sword of Islam, though it was heavy, offered a correction for the decaying influence of Hinduism and rudely but firmly restored the balance between the intellect and physique of the Hindu society.

In spite of this correction, Hinduism could not regain the greatness it enjoyed during the best days of the Guptas and centuries had to elapse before the Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji succeeded in reviving a part of its glory. The Rajputs also played a major part in the Hindu revival.

### **Feeling of Despondency**

For the present the Hindu population of the land was content to wait for better days. The great hardships experien-



ced by the Hindu section of the community influenced the social, cultural and religious aspects of the society. The religion of this period is escapist in character and the vigorous and strenuous life preached by the Gita finds no echo in the Krishna and Radha worship which became the symbol of the Bhakti cult in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The feeling of renunciation which had hitherto underlined the religion of the elect, now became popular chiefly due to the privations and disappointments of the [masses who found existence a burden under the rule of an alien race. It is no wonder that the country found solace in a doctrine of other worldliness when it found itself enslaved and its spirit broken. It is in the nature of man to turn to heaven for refuge when he has little left to lose in this world. The majority of the population was Hindus and the state of despondency in which they lay allowed them no room to look to their physique or take active interest in the pursuit of physical activities.

### **Decline of the Sultanate**

The power of the Delhi Sultans and the extent of their territory was gradually waning chiefly due to the misrule of Mohammed Tughlaq, his mad eccentricities and disastrous experiments in the administration of the country. By the end of the 14th century, the Sultanate of Delhi was confined to the Punjab and to the neighbourhood of Delhi. After the invasion of Timur the power of the Sultanate was almost prostrate and thus after claiming imperial dignity for nearly two centuries, it sank to the position of a provincial capital. When Babar, the founder of the Mughul dynasty, invaded India in 1525 the opposition the king of Delhi offered was insignificant.

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## CHAPTER X

### UNDER THE MUGHUL RULE

The Mughul rulers of India traced their ancestry to the Mongols of Central Asia and to understand properly the spirit of the Mughuls and the mode of their physical activities it is necessary we examine briefly the life and activities of the Mongols. The word 'Mongol' is derived from 'Mong' meaning brave, daring, bold. The names of Chenghiz and Timur, two great Mongol captains, are familiar to all students of history. Babar, the founder of the Mughul dynasty in India, was related by blood to both of the above Mongol captains. The Mongols were men of extraordinary courage and physical strength and at the time of their supremacy, they were dreaded by every civilized race in the world. The strength of these men resembled the strength of wild and ferocious animals of the jungle and in warfare they accepted neither rule nor honour. The accounts of the campaigns of Chenghiz Khan and his generals in Persia and China and those of Timur in India form perhaps the most revolting chapters in the history of the world. The name of the Mongol is associated with blood and rapine and they are justly called the scourge of the world. A favourite hero of their early traditions is KUTULA KHAN ; and from a description of him we can easily understand the type of men whom the Mongols considered as their heroes. "Kutula Khan's voice is compared to the thunder in the mountains, his hands were strong like bear's paws and with them he could break a man in two as easily as an arrow may be broken. He would lie naked near an immense brazier in the winter, heedless of the cinders and sparks that fell on his body, and on awakening, would mistake the burns merely

for the bites of insects. He ate a sheep a day, and drank immense quantities of KERMIS (fermented mare's milk).<sup>1</sup>

### **The Mughuls and The Mongols : Their Mode of Hunting**

Though in comparison with the Mongols the Mughuls who ruled India were more civilised and humane, certain essential characteristics of their Central Asian ancestors persisted with the Mughuls. The story told concerning Akbar, how coming out earlier than usual from his bed, he found the lamps unlit and the lamp-lighter asleep, and how he ordered him to be dashed over the battlements, shows that the Mongol spirit was not absolutely dead in him. The extraordinarily cruel conduct of Aurangzib towards his brothers is yet another instance of the Mongol trait. The Mongols were men who lived an outdoor life. Their most familiar pastime, when not engaged in wars, was hunting. "Chenghiz's and indeed the whole Mongol nation's favourite amusement, when not at war, was hunting. The great winter hunt was more like a campaign than anything else. An enormous tract of country was enclosed ; little by little the circle contracted, and into the inmost circle thus formed, first the Khan, his wives, for they lived the same outdoor life as their husband, and his immediate attendants entered, then, when they were tired of killing ; the great chiefs had their turn, and finally the circle was open for all."<sup>2</sup>

Compare the above mode of Mongol hunting with that of Akbar about which the following description has been given : "Before leaving Lahore, Akbar organised an enormous BATTUE of big game in the neighbourhood. Beaters, including the army, encircled an area of 60 by 60 miles and contracting the circle day by day drove all living creatures towards the centre. About 15,000 wild animals of various kinds were counted and the

1. Howorth's Mongols, Vol. I, pp. 43, 44.

2. A History of the Great Mughuls, Pringle Kennedy, p. 20.



nobles, and afterwards the people generally, were permitted to join in the sport. Akbar himself was employed for five consecutive days in slaughtering animals with swords, spear, musket and arrows."<sup>1</sup>

### **Hindu Traditions of Hunting**

Hunting was the favourite pastime of Hindu monarchs from time immemorial and as a matter of fact, it was enjoined as a duty on the part of the princes to take to hunting occasionally and thus free the people from the menace of wild animals. Hunting was also probably one of the methods by which the ancient kings of India kept their troops on exercise during periods of peace. But this one-sided and unequal contest between man and beast followed by indiscriminate slaughter is peculiar to the Mongols and repugnant to Hindu traditions. Hunting in ancient India was resorted to only when the wild animals crossed their natural abode in the forests and did damage to civilised tracts occupied by man. Even then the encounter between men and beasts was not so unequal as with the Mongols.

### **Mongol Women**

Mongol women shared the outdoor life of their men and themselves were noted for their strength and courage. The following account of a Mongol princess would reveal the characteristics of their women. "This princess was famous for her prowess in wrestling. She sent her challenges far and wide, offering to marry any man who could throw her, but, on the other hand the man, if thrown by her, would have to pay her a hundred horses. In this way she had won ten thousand horses. A prince, renowned at his home for his skill in wrestling, came from a far country to try his fortune. The woman's parents

1. The Cambridge History of India, Vol. IV, p. 95.

tried to persuade her to allow herself to be thrown ; this, however she would not do. The wrestling match came off—she clad in a jerkin of sarcenet, and he in one of sandal—and the result was the defeat of the prince, who was thrown on his back on the palace pavement after a prolonged struggle, and his return unmarried to his home.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Unwhole some Traditions**

Nothing could be further from the ideal of Physical Education than the bloody exploits of these Central Asian tribes and in comparison with the life under the Guptas and Mauryans they appear to be abhorring and almost pre-historic. It is a relief for us to know that the great Mughuls who ruled India had but a little Mongol blood in their veins. They were as a matter of fact Turks. They called themselves Mughuls to maintain their connection with the Great Chenchiz Khan, whose name commanded fear and respect all over the world for centuries after his death. However the traditions handed down to the Mughuls by these Mongols were not wholesome to the proper development of Physical Education. It was nothing but crude physical activities bordering on cruelty, lacking all links with the mind and soul of man. Whatever might be the political greatness of the Mughuls in India and their social achievements, they never succeeded to the end in repeating the finest achievements of the Guptan days in the field of Physical Education.

### **The House of the Mughuls**

The rule of the Mughuls in India inaugurated a long era of peace and prosperity. For the first time after centuries a big government was established enforcing law and order over a large territory. The Mughul rulers except one or two were all

1. A History of the Great Mughuls, Pringle Kennedy, p. 33.



of them men of extraordinary talents and ability. Rarely can we find in the history of any dynasty a succession of able princes one after the other as we do in the Mughul period. Babar, the founder of the dynasty, was foremost an athlete and adventurer. A keen sportsman who was devoted to active bodily exercises and an outdoor life, he bemoans in his memoirs the lack of opportunities in India for sport. "In the rainy season you cannot shoot", he writes, "even with the bow of our country, and it becomes quite useless." Brought up in the mountainous regions of his country where the climate was cool and offered plenty of opportunities for vigorous exercise, Babar found the climate of India enervating and till his death he was an exile in the country he ruled.

### **Physical Activities of the Mughuls**

There was no dearth of physical activities in India during the rule of the Mughuls. Akbar the greatest of the Mughuls was a passionate lover of sports and himself a sportsman of no mean order. During his rule Fatehpur Sikri was teeming with sports activities and Akbar often took part in a game of Polo which had by now become a popular and fashionable game. Abul, Fazl, his biographer is eloquent about the ability of Akbar as a big-game hunter. Akbar was equally fond of swimming and riding, pastimes in which his Turkoman and Mongolic ancestors were unrivalled. Babar possessed an extraordinarily strong physique and it is reported that he used to hold two men under his arm-pit and run a long way off. Almost all the Mughuls were expert swimmers and specially Babar and Akbar could swim across Ganges in full tide. Humayun after his defeat at the hands of Sher Khan escaped by swimming across Ganges with the help of a water-carrier who gave him his inflated goat's skin. Akbar once took his foes in total surprise by performing a great feat of riding from Fatehpur Sikri to Pattan, a large town in Gujarat, a distance of 800 miles in nine days.

Pringle Kennedy writes as follows regarding the physical exploits of Akbar : "Extremely athletic and active, he would have been a terror of modern anti-opium leagues for he, like his friends the Rajputs, was passionately addicted to this drug. On the other hand, he was not a lover of meat, and in this respect would have delighted our friends the vegetarians. As to his personal activity, I have related one instance of it already in his rapid journey from Agra to Pattan in the year 1573 A.D. He was accustomed to walk great distances, especially when on pilgrimage and was a first class swimmer and rider. In his favourite game Chougan, a sort of Polo, he excelled, and stories of his personal bravery and skill in killing tigers, even though they may be largely discounted, still bear witness to his intrepidity as a sportsman."<sup>1</sup>

### **Sports Column in Ain-i-Akbari**

Akbar had an eye for details and *Ain-i-Akbari*, written by Abul Fazl, a close friend of Akbar, describes the duties of his staff. They had first to act as court journalists—to record the different orders and daily doings of the Emperor. Such minute things as what he ate and drank, when he slept and when he rose from bed, are recorded. "This official diary and court record, included a "Sports Column" recording the royal hunting parties, the animal fights and the bettings thereon, the games of chess and cards, Polo, CHAUPAR and NARD. In the northern half of the great palace quadrangle is a PACHISI board, cut in the pavement, similar to the one in the Samman Burj in the Agra palace. Here Akbar and the ladies of the court amused themselves by playing the game with slave-girls as living pieces."<sup>2</sup>

### **The Game of Chaupar**

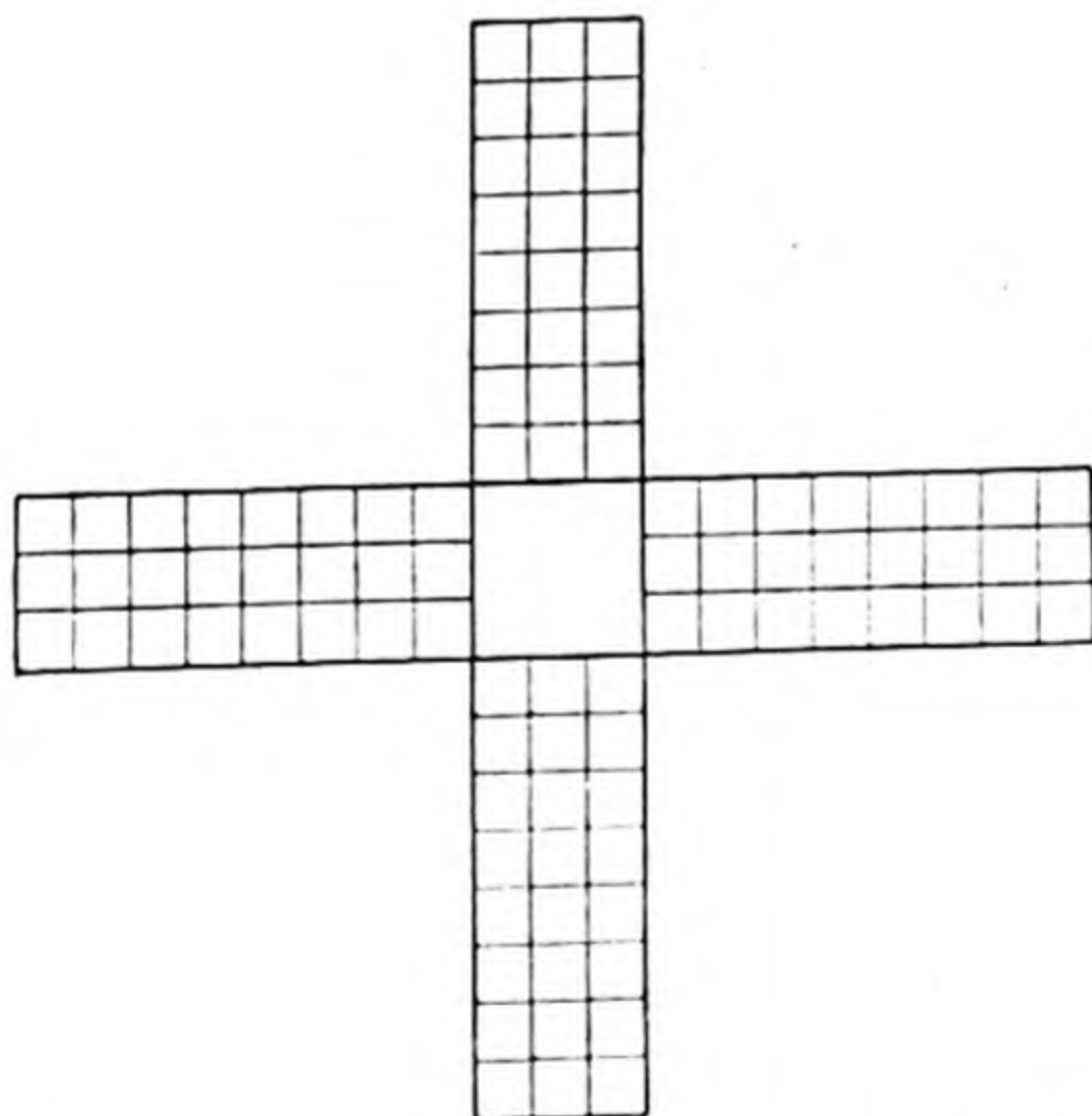
Abul Fazl describes the game of CHAUPAR as follows :

1. A History of the Great Mughuls, Pringle Kennedy, p. 294.
2. Aryan Rule in India, Havell, p. 477.



“This is a very ancient Hindustani game. There are sixteen pieces of one form, but of four different colours, and they all move in the same direction. Frequently four people sit down together at this game each having his respective adversary and playing with four pieces of the same colour. There are three dice, having on one side one spot, on another two, on the third five and on the fourth side six spots.

The table is composed of two parallelograms, intersecting each other at right angles ; and each of the four sides of this cross is divided into twenty-four equal parts, a square space being left in the centre of the whole, as is shown in the following figure.



Each player places a piece on the sixth, and another on the seventh square of the middle line of the division which fronts him ; and one piece on the seventh, and another on the eighth square of the lower line of the division on his right. The pieces begin moving to the right and proceed all round the table on

the outer line, till they come to the middle line again. When the pieces are brought round to the sixth and seventh squares of the middle line, it is called a sure game and from the situation he must throw the number that will exactly carry his pieces into the space in the centre, which concludes the game."<sup>1</sup>

### **Chundel Mundel**

Proceeding with his description of the indoor recreation of the Mughul court, the biographer of Akbar discusses a game known as CHUNDEL MUNDEL which was one of the favourite pastimes of Akbar. "This game was invented by His Majesty. The table resembles that of Chaupar, only that it is circular and has sixteen sides for as many people to play at. There are four dice, and the pieces move the same as in the game of Chaupar. Whoever gets his pieces up first, is paid by the other fifteen players and the next by fourteen, and so on, till the last who pays every one."<sup>2</sup>

According to Abul Fazl the game of cards with pictures painted on them was quite popular.

### **Kinds of Soldiery**

ABUL FAZL mentions several classes of soldiers who specialised in particular physical activities. He discusses in detail about a tribe called SHUMSHEERBAY which consisted of gladiators. "This tribe is of various kinds, and the men perform wonderful feats; fighting and jumping with great art and agility. Some fight with shields and others engage with cudgels; these last are called in the Hindovee language, LAKRAYIT. Others have no defence and make use of one hand only, and are thence called in Hindustan, EKHATEH. Those who come from the

1. Ayeen Akbery, By Abul Fazl, Tr. by Francis Gladwin, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 213-214.

2. Ayeen Akbery, By Abul Fazal, Tr. by Francis Gladwin, Vol. I, Part II, p. 214.



eastern parts of Hindustan, use a small shield, which they call CHORWAH. Those of the Northern provinces have shields of such a magnitude, as to cover a man and horse and this kind of shield is called TILWAH. Others who are called PEHRAYIT, use a shield somewhat less than the height of a man, and one GUZ in breadth. Others called BANAYIT have a long sword, whose handle measures a GUZ in length, which they manage very dexterously. There is another famous tribe called BUNGOLEE, who have not any shield, but make use of a singular kind of sword, with a crooked hilt, which they handle with great dexterity. Others are very skilful in fighting with daggers and knives of various forms; and of these there are upwards of one hundred thousand, the choicest of whom are entertained by his majesty. The SUDDY or SIRDAR of a hundred SHUMSHEERBAY is at least of the rank of AHDY. His pay is from eighty to six hundred Dams<sup>1</sup> per mensem.

The Pehluwans are wrestlers and boxers of Iran and Turan. There are also expert slingers of Gujerat and other parts of Hindustan who are called MUL, numbers of whom are in His Majesty's service. Their monthly pay is from seventy to four hundred and fifty Dams; and everyday some of the above combat together and receive various rewards."<sup>2</sup>

### **Description of Edward Terry**

Edward Terry a western traveller who toured Mughul India during the years 1616-19 gives the following account as regards the sports and amusements of the people: "For pastimes they delight in hawking, hunting of hares, deer, or wild beasts. Their dogs for chase are made somewhat like our grey-hounds; but much lesse; they open not (do not give tongue) in the pursuit of the game. They hunt likewise with leopards, which

1. One rupce=40 Dams.

2. Ayeen Akbery, By Abul Fazl, Tr. by Francis Gladwin, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 172-173.

by leaping sease on that they pursue. They have a cunning device to take wild-fole; where a fellow goes into the water with a fowle of that kind he desires to catch, whose skinne is so artificially as that it appears alive. He keeps all his body but the face under water on which he lays this counterfeit: thus coming among them plucks them by the leg under water. They shoote for pastime much in bowes, which are made curiously in the country of buffeloes hornes, glewed together; to which they have arrowes made of little canes excellently headed and feathered. In these they are so skilful that they will kill birds flying. Others take delight in managing their horses on which they ride; ... In their houses they play much at that most ingenious game we call Chesse, or else at tables. They have cardes but quite different from ours. Sometimes they make themselves merry with cunning jugglers or mountebankes, who will suffer snakes they keepe in baskets to bite them, and presently cure the swelling with powders; or else they see the tricks of apes and monkeys.”<sup>1</sup>

### Music and Painting

Almost all the Mughuls were patrons of fine arts. Music and painting received great patronage under their rule. Akbar was so much interested in the art of painting that he got painters to come from Persia and work for him. Akbar's enthusiasm for painting can be understood from the fact that in his lightning-like descent on Gujerat, he took three painters among the people whom he selected to go with him. Jehangir was a connoisseur of painting and even Aurangzeb, reputed for his austerity, patronised the art in the earlier part of his reign. Music was in high favour under the rule of the great Mughuls till it suffered a setback in the hands of Aurangzeb who, true to the tenets of Islam, forbade it in his realm.

1. Early Travels in India, Edward Terry, (1616-19), p. 312. Editor: Williams Foster.



## Status of Music

Raja Man Singh of Gwalior was a great patron of music and his school of music was famous all over India. Tansen, who is claimed to be the greatest exponent of Indian music, was a favourite of Akbar. But music in Muslim India was mostly in the hands of professionals and they were looked down in society. On the contrary in South India music was practised both by the rich and poor and even today the majority of the great masters of South Indian music are Brahmins of the highest social standing.

## Literature

As for literature both Persian and Sanskrit were encouraged. The name of Dara Shukoh, the elder brother of Aurangzeb is still revered all over India for the encouragement he gave to learning specially to the study of Sanskrit. During this period architecture reached great heights. The city of Fatehpur Sikri which Akbar laid out and built as his capital, serves as an example of the mingling of Hindu and Muslim conceptions. Of the great Taj Mahal, the Moti Masjid and the Red Fort, little need be said. Right from Babar, the founder of the dynasty, to Aurangzeb, all the Mughuls were lovers of gardens and they filled the country with pleasant gardens. The Mughul gardens in Kashmir pay a tribute to the aesthetic sense of these rulers. Babar specially who loved his native land of Kabul often felt home sick, and to remind himself of the cool regions where he was born and bred, ordered several gardens to be prepared and filled them with artificial fountains which gushed forth water continuously.

Several travellers from Europe visited India in the Mughul days and they bear witness to the wealth and prosperity of Indian cities and towns.

## Absence of Unity between Hindu and Mughul forms of Physical Culture

During the rule of the great Mughuls the prestige of India stood high in the outside world and she took her place with the most civilised countries and with the most powerful nations. No student of history can refute the claim of the Mughuls for a lasting place in the history of our country for the long era of peace and prosperity they introduced in India. In several branches of human activity, the rule of the Mughuls recorded great progress. Nowhere perhaps does the happy fusion of Hindu and Islamic conceptions manifest themselves more fruitfully than in the field of architecture where the Muslims built for themselves an immortal place, drawing inspiration from the age-long traditions of Hindu India. While such is the case, it is a matter of regret for the students of Physical Education to note the absence of unity in the field of Physical Education. As we noted earlier the traditions handed over to the Mughuls in India by their Central Asian forefathers was not altogether in line with Hindu thought and in spite of the long residence of the Mughuls in India and their association with Hindu culture, the difference remained as wide as ever. Akbar indeed made an attempt specially in the later part of his reign to bridge the wide gulf. His attempts were anyhow defeated by Aurangzeb, his overzealous kinsman, who switched back to the original concepts of Islam. In the latter half of his reign, Akbar in deference to the feelings of the Hindus, discouraged the violent sports in pursuit of which his ancestors revelled. "In his youth," to quote Havell, "Akbar was passionately fond of all kinds of sport, but later on he revolted against the indiscriminate slaughter of animals and reckoned an inordinate passion for the chase among the four besetting sins which royalty should avoid—the other three being gambling, wine and women."

7266



## **Ideological Difference**

The Mughul period as we emphasised before did not lack in games and sports and Fetehtpur Sikri the royal city was a beehive of sports activities. For all that, the play habits of the Moghuls were contrary to Indo-Aryan traditions and far removed from the realm of mind and soul to be approved by their Hindu contemporaries. The basic difference between the Hindu and Islamic religions was a standing barrier for the meeting of the two schools of physical culture ; for, in Hindu India physical training or education whatever we might call it, was allied to Hindu religion and the same difference that divided Islam and Hinduism stood between the Hindu and Islamic mode of Physical Culture. It might be argued here that the ideological difference between the two religions was of no barrier for the development of Indo-Islamic painting, literature, architecture etc. We can in reply only say that in such of those spheres where religious feelings and traditions did not intervene, a happy synthesis was possible.

## **Element of Cruelty**

The distinctive characteristics of Islamic play traditions can be appreciated from the following account left by Bernier, a European traveller, who visited India during the days of the Mughuls. "The festivals generally conclude with an amusement unknown in Europe—a combat between two elephants ; which takes place in the presence of all the people on the sandy place near the river : the king, the principal ladies of the court, and the Omrahs viewing the spectacle from different apartments in the fortress. A wall of earth is raised three or four feet wide and five or six high. The two ponderous beasts meet one another face to face, on opposite sides of the wall, each having a couple of riders, that the place of the man who sits on the shoulders, for the purpose of guiding the elephant with a large iron hook, may immediately be supplied if he should be thrown down. The

riders animate the elephants either by soothing words, or by chiding them as cowards, and urge them on with their heels, until the poor creatures approach the wall and are brought to the attack. The shock is tremendous and it appears surprising that they ever survive the dreadful wounds and blows inflicted with their teeth, their heads and their trunks. There are frequent passes during the fight ; it is suspended and renewed and the mud wall being at length thrown down, the stronger or more courageous elephant passes on and attacks his opponent and putting him to flight, pursues and fastens upon him with so much obstinacy that the animals can be separated only by means of CHERKYS (catherine wheels on the end of a stick, a common firework in Northern India at the present day) or fireworks which are made to explode between them ; for they are naturally timid, and have a particular dread of fire, which is the reason why elephants have been used with so very little advantage in armies since the use of firearms. The boldest come from Ceylon, but none are employed in war which have not been regularly trained, and accustomed for years to the discharge of muskets close to their heads and the bursting of crackers between their legs.

The fight of these noble creatures is attended with much cruelty. It frequently happens that some of the riders are trodden under foot and killed on the spot, the elephant always cunning enough to feel the importance of dismounting the rider of his adversary whom he therefore endeavours to strike down with his trunk. So imminent is the danger considered that on the day of combat the unhappy men take the formal leave of the wives and children as if condemned to death . . . The mischief with which this amusement is attended does not always terminate with the death of the rider, it often happens that some of the spectators are knocked down and trampled upon by the elephants or by the crowd ; for the rush is terrible when,



to avoid the infuriated combatants, men and horses in confusion take to flight. The second time I witnessed the exhibition I owed my safety entirely to the goodness of my horse and the exertions of my two servants.<sup>1</sup>

### **Prevalence of Suryanamaskar**

The element of cruelty found in the above amusements is true to the characteristics of the Mongols and their Mughul compatriots. Compare the above description with the following one which another European traveller Ralph Fitch gives in connection with the amusements of the Hindus. This foreigner toured India during the years 1583-1619 A.D. "These gentiles" he writes, "will eat no flesh nor kill anything. They live with rice, butter, milk and fruits. They pray in the water naked, and dresse their meat and eate it naked and for their penance they lie flat upon the earth, and rise up and turne themselves about 30 or 40 times and use to heave up their hands to the Sunne, and to kiss the earth, with their arms and legs stretched along out, and their right leg always before the left. Every time they lie downe, they make a score on the ground with their finger to know when their stint is finished."<sup>2</sup>

This curious narration of the uninitiated Western traveller denotes nothing but the morning prayers and exercise by millions of Hindus by the side of rivers during those days. The traveller had observed them perform "SURYANAMASKAR", a part of daily worship for Hindus even today. His accounts only reveal that the Hindus had not forsaken their ancient mode of bodily exercise and were still in large numbers performing them as late as the sixteenth century. Irreconcilable as the religious ideologies of the Hindus and Muslims were, they took to their own path and each preferred a type of physical exercise

1. Travels in the Mughul Empire, A. D. 1656-1668 by Bernier, p. 276.
2. Early Travels in India, Ralph Fitch, 1583-1619. Editor William Foster.

which his religion favoured. If their systems could not meet together, they at least remained aloof and functioned in peace.

The history of two other peoples is related closely to that of the Mughuls and they are respectively Marathas and Sikhs. Both of them are of Hindu origin and they have done significant contribution for the promotion of physical culture in this country and therefore deserve study.

### **Marathas**

The anti-Hindu policies of Aurangzeb set in motion a Hindu reaction to Mughul rule in India. By the middle of the seventeenth century the central authority of the Vijayanagar kings had completely broken down and Hindu political independence had no visible national head. The Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji took up the vacant position. Shivaji in the earlier part of his reign appears to have been only a spirited young man with local ambitions, a pious Hindu no doubt, but not with a sense of national mission. But his subsequent contact with Tukaram and Ramdas, two great Hindu patriots, changed his outlook and turned him as the chief enemy of the Mughul empire. History is replete with the glorious exploits of this wonderful Maratha who shook the very foundation of the Mughul Empire from his small mountain principality and for an excellent survey of the history of Marathas, students are referred to the great works of Sarkar and Sardesai. It is not for us to go into detail regarding the political history of the Marathas. We shall only deal briefly with their contribution to the cause of Physical Education in India.

### **The Contributions of the Marathas**

As early as the seventh century A.D., Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller, paid a tribute to the Maratha people when he described them as hardy, honest and hard-working. Shivaji who was a great soldier and an excellent leader, drew liberally



from these qualities of the people over whom he ruled and within a short time built a strong resistance to the Mughul rule in India. His army was reputed for its discipline and quick movement. He paid great attention to the physical fitness of his people and during his rule the whole land of the Marathas was teeming with healthy physical activities. Discussing the athletic prowess of Shivaji and the life of Marathas, Sardesai writes : "Their secluded life in the hilly Maval country afforded plenty of out-door occupation and opportunities of adventure. Robberies, commotions and disorders were of common occurrence. The climate itself imposed constant exposure to rain, sun and cold and other privations of various kinds. Riding, wrestling, spear-throwing, swordsmanship, swimming through torrential floods, in these and similar sports Shivaji developed a kind of wild comradeship both with man and nature ; soon his aimless wanderings were transformed into studied excursions for organising defence and protection either against the neighbouring chiefs or petty local evil-doers.....He could cover long distances on foot, without fatigue, quickly jumping over obstacles, was a consummate wrestler, and an accurate shot with a catapult or a match-lock."<sup>1</sup>

### **Their Great Traditions in the Field of Physical Culture**

The land of the Marathas is known for its great traditions in the field of physical culture and several of the indigenous games and exercises current in modern India either owe their origin or were made popular during the Maratha ascendancy. Ramdas, the spiritual Guru of Shivaji, appears to have been a great enthusiast in the cause of physical culture. It is reported that he built some 1,200 temples all over India for Hanuman, who is, according to Hindu mythology, the incarnation of strength and physical fitness. He built a large number of gymnasiums all

1. G.S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 89-90.

over Maharashtra. In each one of the gymnasiums so built, an idol of Hanuman was placed and in fact the Hanuman temples of Ramdas were associated with his gymnasiums.

### **Political Situations add impetus to Physical Training**

Shivaji and his countrymen must have considered themselves as agents specially appointed by God to redeem the prestige of the Hindus and rescue them from the tyranny of Muslim rule. An outstanding characteristic of this period is the fervent patriotism of the people of Maratha and their deep love for Hinduism. The religious upbringing of Shivaji and the ceaseless and persuasive preachings of Tukaram and Ramdas must have contributed to this end. Just like Sikhs, their contemporaries, the Marathas were driven to arms by the persecution of the Muslims, specially Aurangzeb who opened a campaign of hatred against the idolators and contrary to the policy of peaceful co-existence followed by Akbar, reimposed on the Hindus the poll tax and the Jazia. Therefore, it cannot be an exaggeration if we say that the political situation existing in India at this period attendant with the social and economic depression of the Hindu population was a potent factor for the resurgence of Hindu mode of physical training and culture. The greatness of India's past and the heroic deeds of her epic heroes were alive in the mind of every Hindu and he considered it his duty to place once again on its feet the past glory of Hindu India. The above phase of the history of physical activities in our country illustrates how closely its study is allied to other spheres of national activity and proves the mistake of confining the study of Physical Education to a single compartment. Again, religion which in ancient India was a staunch friend of physical culture, came once more to its rescue and gave it the much-needed encouragement. The renewed enthusiasm for Physical Culture and the arts of self-defence among the Maratha population was essentially due to the great anxiety of the people



to preserve the integrity of their religion from alien domination. The sacredness of the cow and the sanctity of their temples were so important to the Hindu mind that they were prepared for any sacrifice to preserve it from molestation. Ramdas who offered the impetus for physical culture among the Hindus of Maharashtra was a religious Pandit and not a soldier wedded to the profession of arms.

### **Saint Chaitanya**

The personality of Ramdas brings to our mind Chaitanya, the Vaishnavite saint of Bengal who did equal service to Physical Education in India by stressing physical cleanliness and personal hygiene. Writing of him, Havell says: "Nor did he (Chaitanya) in the intensity of his emotional temperament ignore the hygienic principles which were the bedrock of ancient Aryan religious teaching in India. As if to enforce the lesson that cleanliness is next to godliness, he himself with the most scrupulous care swept the roads and cleansed the temple at Puri, so that it was made *clean, cool and pure like his own mind.*"

### **The Task before Shivaji and Ramdas**

Shivaji and Ramdas knew the great task that awaited them and the formidable power of the Emperor at Delhi to whom they were opposed. To hold their own against the mighty resources of the Mughul Empire they would have to get the best out of every man in the land and they set themselves accordingly to meet the challenge. An extensive drive for physical fitness was launched and hundreds of schools were started all over the land imparting instruction in the arts of defence and attack. Tanaji, Baji Phasalkar, Deshpande, Netaji Palkar and other trustworthy lieutenants of Shivaji reputed for their physical strength and courage lent him great support in his efforts. They popularised exercises like Suryana-

maskar, dands, baithaks, malkhamb, wrestling, lezim club-swinging, sword-fighting, weight-lifting and stick-play. The use of lezimin physical exercises appears to be a Maharashtrian innovation. A lezim in those days was a stiff bow of bamboo bent by a strong iron chain to which a number of small round iron plates were affixed as done even today. Lazim drills were intended to develop agility and grace of movement on the part of the soldiery. Maratha foot-soldiers were reputed for their quickness of movement and agility and in the jungles and mountainous regions they fought, they could progress with the least noise and in absolute stealth.

### **European Accounts of Indian Wrestling**

Accounts by European travellers testify to the immense popularity of the Indian form of wrestling known as KUSHTI among the Hindu soldiery. Among the later rulers Daulatrao Shindia was a great patron of wrestling and retained in his service celebrated wrestlers of the day. State wrestlers were allowed a daily ration of a sheep and 20 pounds of milk. A European lieutenant who followed the above Maratha ruler in his campaigns speaks of women who showed great prowess in the art of wrestling. These amazons sometimes attained such a degree of proficiency that they went about issuing challenge to their male counterparts. The best of the male wrestlers often declined to accept such a challenge from the fear of incurring the disgrace of being worsted by a woman !

### **Patronage of the Peshwas**

Physical culture continued to enjoy the patronage of the Peshwas and Nanasaheb (the third Peshwa) had a personal gymnasium which contained as many as 24 sorts of gymnastic apparatus. Gymnastic competitions and wrestling tournaments were very common. Bajirao II engaged the services of Balam-bhatdada Deodhar who was famous throughout India for his prowess in wrestling, as his personal Physical Training Instructor.



## Real Reasons of Maratha Power

The astonishing success of Maratha arms against the mighty Mughul Empire though it came as a surprise to Aurangzeb and his contemporaries and still forms a romantic reading in the pages of Indian History almost transforming history to an order of fiction, was not achieved by short-cuts. It was the result of ceaseless efforts and endless toil both on the part of Shivaji and his subjects. While the grandees of the Mughul court and their soldiery were spending their time in wine-parties and in search of luxuries, thousands of men in Maharashtra were sweating in their gymnasiums and open fields building up their muscles and developing skills that were to help them in the struggles to come. The whole Maratha nation was in a state of preparation and nothing was considered more important than the task of building the strength of the nation which they were wise enough to know, lay in the health and strength of the people. The psychology of the time is best illustrated by the following words of Ramdas, the religious leader, saint and patriot of Maharashtra: "Strength leads a person to happiness. A person without strength becomes the object of ridicule and is easily overpowered by disease. Strength makes the body handsome. Strength enables a person to enjoy to the full extent wordly pleasures and a person without strength is helpless. Strength accompanied with skill attracts all and is revered by all. It leads a person to self-confidence, courage and brave acts."<sup>1</sup> Strength was the watchword of Marathas and in short it is the essential characteristic of Maratha history in its early period.

## The Sikhs

The repressive policy of Aurangzeb alienated yet another community and they were the Sikhs who contributed in no

1. Encyclopaedia of Indian Physical Culture, Editor Maratha Period, D.C. Majumdar.

small measure to the the downfall of the Mughul Empire. Guru Nanak was the founder of the sect known as Sikhism and originally it was a peaceful and quietist order which preached monotheism and recognised no distinction of caste. The Sikh religion in spite of its original pietist character had from the outset an appeal to the patriotic feelings of the people. The founder of the religion himself did not like the general tendency among the Hindu population to ape the manners, clothing and customs of the ruling Muslim bureaucracy. In one of his poems he sings :

“You perform Hindu worship in private,  
Yet Oh ! my brothers you read the books of  
Mohammedans.  
And adopt their manners.”

It is indeed interesting to note in this connection that the great fad for English clothing, food and manners that characterised some sections of our community when the British ruled our country is not peculiar to one set of people, but has been the general weakness of all people who were subjected to the rule of an alien bureaucracy.

### **Persecution of the Sikhs and its Results**

The sect founded by Nanak gradually increased its strength, gathering in its fold the sturdy Jat cultivators of the Punjab and due to constant persecution by the Muslims, assumed a martial and aggressive character. But it was only during the period of Har Govind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, that this community assumed a definite military character. This man had felt the full weight of the Mughul Empire and had seen two of his sons killed by Aurangzeb's Governor at Sirhind. His father Tej Bahadur was beheaded by the Mughuls and on the head of Govind Singh himself a price was fixed and he was leading the hunted life of an exile. The Sikh Guru became a



sworn enemy of the Muslims and in retaliation armed the whole community and proclaimed himself as Sacha Padshah with his capital at Amritsar. This religious leader donned full armour and went about with a huge armed retinue. In the year when Aurangzeb was deeply entangled in his quarrels with the Marathas, Govind Singh established the KHALSA by which the entire community of the Sikhs was transformed into an armed camp, every member of the sect swearing to suffer the loss of life, family and honour in the service of his community. The valiant Guru of the Sikhs set about exercising his troops and built them into a powerful and strong community reputed for their strength and courage. This brave man reminded his Hindu subjects of the hoary past of their ancestors and instilled in them a love for their religion and traditions.

### **Establishment of the Khalsa**

By the establishment of the KHALSA the Sikh Guru did a great turn to Physical Culture in North India specially in the Punjab. Indigenous mode of Physical Culture became extremely popular and almost every Sikh was a skilled warrior well-versed in the use of different arms. If in the centuries to follow Sikhs built for themselves immortal glory on the battlefields of India in defence of their religion and state it is in no small measure due to the toils of this great man. The Sikhs are the heirs to undying traditions of courage and loyalty and have won for India lasting glory both on battle and sports-fields. The credit of organising one of the most severe acts of resistance to the British domination in India under the leadership of Ranjit Singh belongs to the Sikhs. Tall and bearded the Sikh of the Punjab symbolises the strength and manhood of India and in many an international sports-competition the Sikhs draw repeated applause for their manly bearing and noble performance. Right to this day sports-lovers in foreign lands take the bearded Sikh to be the model youth from India. The

services rendered by the Sikhs to the cause of Physical Education in India can by no means be exaggerated.

## EDUCATION, SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND FOOD HABITS IN MUGHUL TIMES

Babar in his memoirs remarks about the dearth of colleges in India and the decay of learning in general. Humayun and his rival Sher Shah were patrons of learning. But the credit of organising education and laying it on a sure foundation goes once again to Akbar. Though he was in all probability unable to read or write, this great emperor was keenly alive to the value of education and gave it much encouragement. True to the catholicity of his temperament this benevolent monarch ordered several of the important Hindu works to be translated into Persian. Accordingly, the great epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharatha, the Atharva Veda, the Lilavathi, the Tajak (a treatise on astronomy), the history of Kashmir and other well-known Hindu works soon appeared in Persian translation. Akbar was a collector of rare books and paintings and he built a vast library and appointed a full-time librarian to take charge of the same.

In the matter of education Akbar was not sectarian in his policy. He gave equal opportunities both to his Muslim and Hindu subjects to read about their respective religions. While Muslims learnt about the Quran, Hindu pupils had instructions in Vedas, Vyakarana, Vedanta and Yoga Sastra. Following were some of the important subjects in which instruction was given : Ethics, arithmetic, accountancy, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, economics, physics, logic, natural philosophy and history.

We hear the mention of a large college founded by Akbar on the hill at Fatehpur Sikri, a unique one of its kind. In addition to the above college Akbar built several other Madrassas



all over his kingdom. Most of these institutions were residential. Besides the schools run by the state, several other institutions catering for higher studies in music, painting and philosophy, existed and they were run by private individuals. For instance Akbar's nurse Maham Anaga founded a school at Delhi in the year 1561 A.D. The greatness of Akbar as an educationist is not as much for the number of schools he built, as for the absolute concord that obtained between his Hindu and Muslim subjects in the field of education. Giving his praise to Akbar for his policy in education, T.N. Siqueira writes : "The chief achievements of Akbar's reign, therefore, in the field of education were the admission of Hindus and Muslims into the same schools, the encouragement of Hindu and Muslim art and literature, the translation of Hindu and Muslim art and literature, the translation of Hindu and Muslim classics, the patronage of learned men of various countries and religions, and the starting of a comparatively large number of educational institutions."<sup>1</sup>

Both Jahangir and Shah Jahan were lovers of learning and gave it encouragement though the educational policy pursued by them was not as systematic as that of Akbar. Jahangir, unlike his father, had the benefit of education and he was well-versed both in Persian and Turkish languages. He repaired several of the colleges that had fallen into disuse and filled them with students. Shah Jahan founded the imperial college at Delhi in the year 1650. As for Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, mention has been made elsewhere in this book regarding the wide patronage he gave to learning, specially the study of Sanskrit.

Contrary to the policy of education followed by the early Mughul monarchs, Aurangzeb was highly sectarian in his views and confined his patronage to Muslim education only. In

1. The Education of India, T.N. Siqueira, p. 13.

the year 1669 he issued orders to his Provincial Governors to destroy the Hindu schools and temples within their jurisdiction. Himself a studious scholar Aurangzeb was an authority on Muslim theology, but unfortunately he lost sight of the noble policy of toleration followed by Akbar, and consequently did not encourage Hindu education. For the Muslims on the other hand he built a large number of schools and gave them liberal endowments. In Ahmedabad, Patna and Surat he ordered his officials to give free education to poor students in Muslim schools. Bahadur Shah and Muhammad Shah, the successors of Aurangzeb, gave encouragement to education in a way and during the reign of the latter the Jantar Mantar was founded in Delhi by Jai Singh, ruler of Amber. This was an observatory and it gave a stimulus to astronomical studies. But the invasion of Nadar Shah dealt a great blow to the cause of education in North India. Several hundreds of schools and colleges were destroyed and the precious collection of books in the imperial library—the result of years of painful gathering—was taken away to Persia.

### **Extravagance of the Mughul Court—The Evil of Drink**

The Mughul rulers were patrons of different fine arts and even the ladies of the court vied with their husbands in encouraging different arts. India, during the rule of the Mughuls, registered great progress in the development of different arts. But side by side with this development, we notice perceptibly the unhealthy tendency to indulge inordinately in the luxuries of life. Almost all the Mughul rulers were hard drinkers and the nobility followed their example. The courts of the Mughul monarchs were noted for great splendour and extravagance and even when they went on wars they were followed by a large host of dancing women and attended by their wives. It is indeed true that even in ancient Aryan society kings and warriors were addicted to wine and 'Soma'—a kind of intoxicant—was very popular and was



largely indulged in by people in all walks of life. But in no period of the history of our country, perhaps, the evil of drinks was more widespread than in Mughul time. Ancient Aryan warriors drank 'Soma'—the juice of a plant on the eve of wars, to whip themselves for action and to a state of blind fury. With the Mughuls the taking of wine was more a sign of social distinction and different kinds of enervating liquors were indulged in indiscriminately both during war and peace. The malady of liquors and opium which in recent centuries has taken a heavy toll of the manhood of India and from which India is struggling to emancipate herself, thanks chiefly due to the efforts of great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, is largely a legacy of the Mughuls and Britishers who followed them to power.

### **Food Habits**

In the matter of food habits the same note of luxury is observed. The simple and austere food of the Hindus was gradually being replaced by rich and highly spiced preparations like the PILAWS, BIRIANIS and other like foods of the Middle East. In the houses of the Hindu nobility the great feasts were in imitation of the Persian and Central Asian Amirs.

### **Clothing and Social Manners**

Even as regards clothing there were great changes. We saw earlier how Nanak complained against the habit of Hindus copying the dress and the manners of the Muslims. Muslim costumes ruled the fashion of the day and though the Hindus of the lower classes still wore the traditional dhoti, the higher classes went in for pyjamas and chapkans. So keen was the desire of the subject population to imitate the manners of the Muslims that soon the 'HOOKAH', predominantly a Muslim habit, came to be accepted as a mark of social refinement.

### **Place of Women**

Though during this period several women distinguished

themselves in various activities and left their names in the history of our country the condition of women as a whole showed a marked deterioration. The names of Jijabai, the illustrious mother of Shivaji, Jehanara, Roshanara, Chand Bibi and Zebunissa, the learned daughter of Aurangzeb, are well-known to us. But these were princesses and noblewomen and illustrious as they are, give us no evidence of the general status of women in society. But from the accounts that are available to us we can deduce that the position of women was not altogether satisfactory and certainly not in proportion to the prosperity and advancement which this period records.



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## CHAPTER XI

### SOUTH INDIA

South India unlike the North remained comparatively safe from foreign invasions in her long history and whenever there was a danger to the integrity of the kingdoms established in the North, she offered protection and preserved the Indo-Aryan traditions from total annihilation at the hands of foreign intruders. The South of India functioned as a repository for ancient Indo-Aryan culture. The ancient kingdoms of the South *viz.*, Chera, Chola and Pandya, for centuries upheld the highest traditions of Indo-Aryan state-craft and spread India's glory far across the seas. We have in an earlier chapter discussed the foreign connections of these kingdoms and their elaborate trade with Rome and other Western cities.

#### **Muslim Incursions into South India**

The Tamilian kings and in later times the Pallavas offered great patronage to games and sports. The peace and quietude which the South enjoyed in the retirement of her forests and mountain fastness was anyhow disturbed by the ambition of the Delhi Sultanate under Alauddin Khilji. Possibly for the first time in her history the highly cultured and civilized people of the South experienced the violent shock of war on a major scale at the hands of the Mohammedans who invaded her in the early part of fourteenth century A.D. The South anyhow reacted to the danger of Muslim incursions quickly enough and organised resistance by forming a powerful Hindu empire. The newly formed empire of Vijayanagara acted as an effective barrier to the spread of Muslim power in the South.

## Preservation of Play Traditions

We noted earlier that just as she was able to uphold the traditions of Aryavārtha in different branches of our civilisation, the South had been able to retain in their original form some of the oldest play traditions of our country. Abundant material is available regarding the play-habits of our people from ancient South Indian literature. The newly formed empire at Vijayanagara embodied some of the highest traditions of Indo-Aryan civilisation handed down to her by the Tamilian kings and they included a great love for games and physical activities. The rulers of this mighty empire attached great importance to games and sports.

## Festivals and Sports in Vijayanagara

In the height of its glory, Vijayanagara was noted for several important festivals, chief among them being Mahanavami, Ratha Saptami (car festival), Deepavali, Navarathri etc. The festivals lasted for several days and were marked by great rejoicing and lavish expenditure. Wrestling formed a part of the festivals and wrestlers enjoyed special honour and patronage. The following account of the Mahanavami festival by PAES, a Portuguese traveller, reveals the high place the wrestlers enjoyed. "After all this is done and arranged the king gives forth and seats himself on the dais I have mentioned, where is the throne and the other things, and all those that are inside make their salaam to him. As soon as they have done this, the wrestlers seat themselves on the ground, for these are allowed to remain seated, but no other, howsoever great a lord he be, except the king so commands ; and these also eat betel, though none else may eat it in his presence except the dancing women who may always eat it before him."<sup>1</sup> The festival of Holy was celebrated

1. Cited by Saletore in his *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire*, vol. II, p. 380.



with as much enthusiasm as it is done all over India today. All the above festivals were marked by public tournaments, music, drama and dancing. A colourful and attractive exhibition of fire-works followed and this particularly excited the wonder and admiration of the several western travellers who visited Vijayanagara.

### **Dancing and Music**

Some of the bas-reliefs found in the hamlet of HAMPI, depict phases of the brighter side of the life of the people of these days. The most prominent among these bas-reliefs are those related to dancing and music. Never was the art of dancing held in greater esteem in the history of South India than in the days of Vijayanagara kings. In their patronage of these fine arts, the kings of Vijayanagara followed the example of the Tamilian kings. According to Tamil literature, women who were acknowledged experts in dancing were favoured by the kings with a special mark of honour. They were invested with the title of TALAIKKOLI. The award of this title was usually preceded by a grand ceremony and was followed by the presentation of a staff embellished with nine gems and covered with gold plates. Almost all the western travellers who visited the country of Vijayanagara pay their tributes to the dexterity and skill of Indian dancers. This art was practised even by kings.

### **Kolattam—A Game**

A series of sculptures on the walls of Vijayanagara represent a popular game known as KOLATTAM or stick-play yet a favourite with the rural women-folk in South India. Here is an interesting description of the game by a European traveller, PIETRO DELLA VALLE: "All of them carry'd in each hand a little round painted stick, about a span long, or a little more, which they struck together after a musical measure, to the

sound of drums and other instruments, and one of the skilful-est of the company sung one verse of a song, at the end of which they all replied seven or eight times, in the number of their meter with the word, COLE, COLE, COLE, which signifies I know not what, but, I believe, 'tis a word of joy."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to dancing and music, drama and puppet-shows enjoyed the patronage of the kings and people in South India.

### **Physical Activities of Krishna Deva Raya**

Along with the above fine arts, people engaged themselves in fencing, duelling, wrestling and hunting. The kings of Vijayanagara and particularly Krishna Deva Raya were lovers of manly games and sports. PAES, the Portuguese traveller, writes about the athletic pursuits of the above king. "This king is accustomed everyday to drink a QUARTILHO (three-quarter pint) of oil of Gingelly before daylight, and anoints himself all over with the said oil, he covers his loins with a small cloth, and takes in his arms great weights made of earthenware and then, taking a sword, he exercises himself with it till he has sweated out all the oil, and then he wrestles with one of his own wrestlers. After this labour he mounts a horse and gallops about the plain in one direction and another till dawn, for he does all this before day-break. Then he goes to wash himself and a Brahman washes him whom he holds sacred."<sup>2</sup>

### **Duelling**

Duelling was very common in the empire and people resort-

1. Cited by Saletore in his Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire, vol. II, p. 411.

2. Cited by Saletore in his Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire, vol. II, p. 416.



ed to it often to wipe off insults and also on account of rivalry in love-affairs. Permission for a duel was given by the king and if those who were engaged in it were men of position the king went in person to witness the duel. It was the custom of young men of Vijayanagara to manage and make use of one sort of arms, in which they specialised and they invariably used the same weapon even in times of war.

### **Wrestling a Popular Sport**

In the sports activities of Vijayanagara, wrestling occupied a place of pre-eminence. It was the favourite pastime of both king and peasant and even women took to it. PAES describes the Indian mode of wrestling as follows: "Their wrestling does not seem like ours, but there are blows (given) so severe as to break teeth, and put out eyes, and disfigure faces, so much so that here and there men are carried off speechless by their friends; they give one another fine falls too. They have their captains and judges, who are there to put each one on equal footing in the field, and also to adjust the honours to him who wins."<sup>1</sup>

Nuniz, another traveller, adds to the above description. "The king has a thousand wrestlers for these feasts who wrestle before the king, but not in our manner, for they strike and wound each other with two circlets with points, which they carry in their hands to strike with, and the one most wounded goes and takes his reward in the shape of silk cloth, such as the king gives to these wrestlers. They have a captain over them and they do not perform any other service in the kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

The later account given by Nuniz obviously does not pertain to wrestling. The foreigner probably witnessed a combat between well-built men in which they used weapons and mis-

1. Sewell : "Forgotten Empire", pp. 268-271.

2. Sewell : "Forgotten Empire", pp. 378.

took it for wrestling. Professional wrestlers were known under the name of JATTIS and gymnasiums for their training existed all over the country. A gymnasium was called GARIDI or GARADI.

### **Gladiatorial Contests**

Gladiatorial combats were of frequent occurrence and were patronised by the kings of Vijayanagara. These fights which are obnoxious in the sense of modern Physical Education unfortunately found their place in almost every civilised nation in ancient days. Those who have read Gibbon would remember the gruesome scenes of gladiatorial contests in ancient Rome. The city of Madura in South India was a noted gladiatorial centre and the remains of an arena built for that purpose still survives there and is called TAMUKKAM maidan. According to TAYLOR it was built by the king Tirumala Nayaka for combats between gladiators and elephants, tigers and bears; and for the purpose of looking on during the spectacle, he had a two-storied building constructed.<sup>1</sup> But the marble plaque at the entrance of Gandhi Samark Sangrahalaya in the modern city of Madurai which stands on the ancient site bears the following inscription: "TAMUGAMU, which in Telugu meant a sports pavilion, a grand-stand of multipillared and arched structure supporting a central dome, which later became in Tamil TAMUKKAM from which gladiatorial exhibitions—elephant fights and such like—might be witnessed was first built about 1670 A.D. by Rani Mangamma."

### **Hunting**

Hunting was a favourite sport with the princes of royal blood. Elephant and boar-hunting appear to have been very popular. Several of the kings of this period including the

1. Cited by Saletore in his "Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire", Vol. II, p. 421.



great Krishna Deva Raya bear the title of GAJA-BENTEKARA (hunter of elephants). Swimming and horse-riding were two other games that were popular in Vijayanagara. The kings of Vijayanagara spent enormous wealth in importing costly horses from Arabia. The following account by a foreign traveller named LINSCHOTEN illustrates the love of the people for swimming and water-sports: "They are very expert in swimming and diving, they rowe up and down the Rivers in Boates called ALMADIAS, whereof some of them are hewen out of a piece of wood, and so narrow that a man can hardly sit in them, and in chanceth of often times that they turne over and over twice or thrice before they passe the River, and then they leape out into the water and turne them up, and so powring out the water they get into them againe."

Games with the use of dice and balls were also in vogue.

### Public Health

The importance of public health and sanitation was keenly felt by the people of the South from very early in their period of History. Administration was highly decentralised and the rural administration was carried on by Village Panchayats under the guidance of village elders. The kings gave great respect to these village assemblies and did not normally interfere with their working. Banking and mercantile corporations, craft guilds, and religious organisations enjoyed similar rights. The kings' courts did not interfere in their domestic affairs. All disputes between members were settled according to custom and the traditions of each of these bodies. The village assemblies carried on their business by means of a number of Committees. References are often made to a Water Committee, which attended to the water-supply, a Garden or Park Committee

and a Committee to look after the religious affairs of the community. The public health and sanitation of the village was looked after by a committee. The consciousness exhibited by these people of our country for health and sanitation hundreds of years before, excites our admiration and can well be emulated by our villagers today. The Government of India have taken a step in the right direction in their recent decision to give more powers to the Village Panchayats.

### **Temple—Nerve-centre of Activities**

South Indian villages with the towering 'Gopurams' of their stately temples, public tanks and 'Mandapams' form altogether a different picture from the villages of the north. In the history of South India the temple is more important as a social and economic entity than as a religious institution. Writing about the part played by the temple in the history of India, specially of the South, Prof. Nilakanta Sastri says: "The temple was the centre of universal culture, The best architecture and sculpture and such painting as there was, were lavished on it. Fine arts like music, dancing and jewel-making flourished in the temples and primarily on their account. Several temples contained libraries and were centres of religious and secular learning. The drama, closely allied to the dance, was promoted by some temples. Above all, the temple was for the village the most powerful economic corporation which not only sustained by means of its lavish endowments, the arts of civilised existence, but enabled the villagers to turn to it in times of need for economic support, if not also for purposes of physical defence."<sup>1</sup>

The temple was the nerve-centre for the social life of the community and the festivals and celebrations connected with it provided valuable means of recreation to the people. It was

1. The Pandian Kingdom, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, p. 231.



the Community Centre for the people and people in all walks of life stood united in the service of the temple.

### **Women in South India**

Women occupied a place of honour in society and took part in physical activities. Nuniz, a foreign traveller, testifies to the fact that women in large numbers practised the art of wrestling. The functions of women in Southern India appear to have been more varied than those of their sisters of the north. In addition to their duties around the person of the king, they were entrusted, in a limited degree, with the work of administration in religious and political matters. They took active part in different activities of the state and some of them reached a high degree of proficiency in literature and fine arts. But the high status of women in South India, specially in Vijayanagara, was to a certain extent marred by the presence of a large number of public women and prostitutes.

### **Food, Habitation and Dress**

The classical regulations laid down by Manu and other ancient law-givers regarding the type of food to be taken obtained in South India just as in the case of North and the majority of the people were vegetarians. According to PAES: "These dominions are very well-cultivated and very fertile, and are provided with quantities of cattle such as cows, buffaloes and sheep . . . The land has plenty of rice and Indian corn, grains, beans, and other kinds of crops which are not sown in our parts ; also an infinity of cotton. Of the grains there is a great quantity, because, besides being used as food for men, it is also used for horses since there is no other kind of barley ; and this country has also much wheat and that good." People in addition to the above took vegetables and fruits such as grapes, oranges, limes, pomegranates, jack-fruits and mangoes. Another important item in their daily food was oil. Different kinds of edible oils

were consumed but gingelly oil was the one widely used. People in all walks of life were fond of chewing betel-leaves.

Marco Polo has the following thing to say regarding the mode of eating and drinking of the South Indian people : "It is their practice that every one, male and female, do wash the whole body twice everyday ; and those who do not wash are looked on much as we look on the Patarins. You must know that in eating they use the right hand only and would on no account touch their food with the left hand . . . So also they drink only from drinking vessels, and every man hath his own ; nor will any one drink from another's vessel. And when they drink, they do not put the vessel to the lips, but hold it aloft and let the drink spout into the mouth. No one would on any account touch the vessel with his mouth nor give a stranger drink with it. But if the stranger have no vessel of his own they will pour the drink into his hands and he may thus drink from his hands as from a cup."<sup>1</sup>

The houses of the common people were built of bricks and were invariably thatched and one-storied. The houses had open space before them and were surrounded by low compound walls. The entrance and pavements outside the houses were sprinkled daily with water mixed with cow-dung. The houses were neat and according to foreign witnesses well-constructed.

Both men and women wore ornaments and cotton fabrics were more in use than woollen clothing.

1. Cited in "The Pandyan Kingdom", By K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, p. 198.

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पत्र-व्यवहार मनुष्य जीवन के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में अपना उचित स्थान रखता है परिवारिक, व्यवहारिक, सामाजिक, राजनीतिक इत्यादि कोई क्षेत्र ऐसा नहीं जिसमें मनुष्य पत्र-व्यवहार के बिना एक पग भी चल सके। हमें जीवन में अपने विभिन्न प्रकार के कामों के सम्बन्ध में विभिन्न प्रकार के व्यक्तियों संस्थाओं और कार्यालयों से पत्र-व्यवहार करना पड़ता है।

इसलिए पत्र लिखने की कला से परिचित होना और इसे सीखना आज के युग में प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के लिए आवश्यक है।

इस पुस्तक में हर प्रकार के पत्र लिखने के ढंग विशाल रूप से समझाए गए हैं। और पत्रों के बहुत से उदाहरण दिये गए हैं।



रूठी रानी मुंशी प्रेम चन्द का एक ऐतिहासिक उपन्यास है जिसमें यह दिखलाया गया है कि राजपूत औरतें मरते मर जाती थीं, लेकिन मान मर्यादा पर आँच नहीं आने देती थीं। त्याग और वीरता में वे पुरुषों से कम नहीं थीं।

यह उपन्यास उनकी शुरू की कृति है अब तक केवल उर्दू में मिलता था और हिन्दी में पहली बार प्रकाशित किया गया है।

**भारती बुक सेंटर**

१६६, न्यू लाजपत राय मार्केट दिल्ली



यह एक स्वाभाविक बात है कि मनुष्य ऐसा भोजन नहीं चाहता जो केवल पेट की आग बुझाये, परन्तु मनुष्य के शारीरिक और स्वास्थ्य के विकास में भी उपयोगी हो और खाने में स्वादिष्ट ।

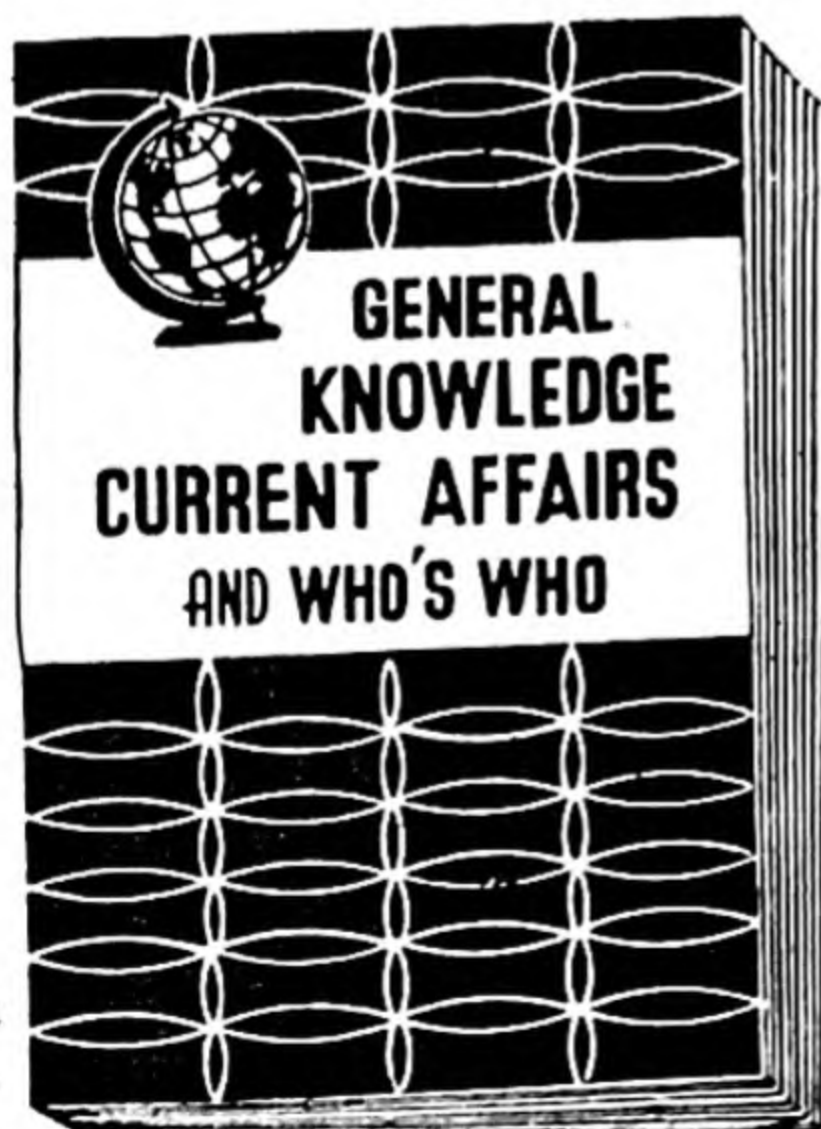
यह पुस्तक आप को ऐसे नाना प्रकार के स्वादिष्ट भोजन तैयार करने की विधियों का ज्ञान विकसित करेगी, जिनकी सहायता से आप अपने और अपने मेहमानों के लिए मनपसंद भोजन तैयार कर सकती हैं ।

घर की महिलाओं और स्कूलों व कालेजों में पढ़ने वाली लड़कियों के लिए बहुत लाभदायक सिद्ध होगी ।

मूल्य १)

**भारती बुक सेंटर**

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